

## Cornell note-making approach

There are four stages to good note taking:

1. **Note taking**
2. **Note making**
3. **Note interacting**
4. **Note reflecting**

1. In note taking, students:

- Prepare a page to take notes the same way each time. An essential question at the top of the page focuses the learner on the key learning objective that they should be able to discuss upon leaving the class
- Rule the page into two columns, with the first column taking up about a third of the page. The space on the left is for questions and notes that may be added in later as students reflect on their notes. The space on the right is for the student to take notes from the lecture, textbook, laboratory experiment, video, audio, whatever the source
- Listen and take notes in their own words – paraphrase what they hear so it makes sense to them rather than write down verbatim what they hear/see
- Leave spaces and lines between main ideas for revising later and adding information
- Develop their own consistent system of abbreviations and symbols to save time as they take notes
- Write in phrases, not complete sentences
- Use bullet points and lists where possible
- Learn how to listen for important information versus trivial information
- Take cues from the lecturer or source, e.g. “This is important...”
- Use highlighters and colour to indicate key ideas, changes in concepts or links between information.

## 2. In note making, students:

- Review and revise the content of their notes
- Write questions in the left-hand side near where the answer is contained on the right-hand side
- Connect key chunks of material in the notes pages using colour or symbols
- Exchange ideas and collaborate with other students to check for understanding and test the comprehensiveness of each other's notes.

## 3. In note interacting, students:

- Link all the learning together by writing a summary that addresses the essential question and answers the questions from the left margin. Note that a summary is different from a reflection that focuses on the student's response to the learning task or content
- Learn from their notes by building in to their study timetable regular times for revising their notes for each subject
- Cover the information on the right-hand side and use the questions as study prompts before a test.

## 4. In note reflecting:

- Written feedback should be provided by a peer, tutor or teacher to check for the student's understanding in the initial learning phase
- Students should address the feedback by focusing on one area of challenge they are experiencing in their learning
- Students should also reflect over an entire unit on a regular basis leading up to exams and tests.