

**Cornell Note Taking**  
Reading Comprehension Strategy

The Cornell or the Two Column Note Taking strategy (Pauk 2001) helps students determine importance and to self-question as they read. It is quite a sophisticated note taking strategy that originated in Cornell University and students would need to be familiar with comprehension strategies such as 'skimming' and 'scanning' to use it effectively. It involves reading comprehension strategies that effective readers use to make sense of text.

**Why use Cornell Note Taking?** The strategy provides students with a system for organising information in a useful format. Students identify the main ideas and important information in a text, a prerequisite to developing insight. It can promote active reading, improves concentration and helps students to retain key points in a text.

**Suggested Learning Outcomes**

R2. Read for a variety of purposes: learning, pleasure, research, comparison

R3. Use a wide range of reading comprehension strategies appropriate to texts, including digital texts: to retrieve information; to link to previous knowledge, follow a process or argument, summarise, link main ideas; to monitor their own understanding; to question... synthesise evaluate and analyse

**Key Skills**

- Being Literate
- Managing Myself
- Managing Information and Thinking

**Preparation**

You may wish to share a photocopiable resource if students are completing the Cornell Note Taking activity. Alternatively, you could use a board, visualiser or a large page to demonstrate how students divide up a page and encourage them to create their own note-taking pages.

**Instructions**

Explain that Cornell or Two Column Note Taking is a useful tool for recording notes and key information while reading a text. Demonstrate how a page is ruled or divided into three parts;

-The left margin (1/3 of the page) captures the main ideas or questions after reading

-The right margin (2/3 of the page) is used to record details while reading

-The bottom of the page leaves space for a brief summary.

This can be demonstrated for students on a board, using a large sheet of paper or using a visualiser.

Select a text and model how to skim the text to note any formal headings or subheadings, or any natural breaks in the text. Discuss how subheadings and paragraphs often point to the main idea of the passage/chapter. You might then model reading the text, and underlining or highlighting information. Proceed to make note of important details on the right side of the board or ruled page. Only write words and phrases, not sentences or word-for-word copying. Also explain that the first and last sentences of a paragraph can point to the main idea.

Read back over these notes and pick out main ideas and keywords/concepts. Note these on the left side of the board/page. This column can be used for main ideas, key concepts, key words, steps, etc. but also for questions that a student may have in relation to what they have read.

Cornell Note Taking Template

<u>Cues</u> (key concepts/points/words after reading)	<u>Notes</u> (main ideas and concepts during reading/listening)
<u>Summary</u> (After reading: one or two sentences capturing the key points)	