

Cornell Notes

CUES AND QUESTIONS After class: write key words and questions here.	NOTES During class: ideas in your own words, not full sentences.
	SUMMARY Same day: sum up the page in two or three sentences, from memory.

How to Use Cornell Notes, and a Listening Checklist

The Cornell system was developed by Walter Pauk at Cornell University and described in his book *How to Study in College* (first edition 1962).

The five steps

- 1  **Record.** During class, write main ideas and examples in the Notes column.
- 2  **Reduce.** Soon after, pull key words and questions into the Cues column.
- 3  **Recite.** Cover the Notes column. Answer each cue out loud or on scrap paper, then check.
- 4  **Reflect.** Ask how this connects to what you already know. Write the summary.
- 5  **Review.** Spend a few minutes each week reciting from the cues.

Lecture listening checklist

Before class

- ☐ I skimmed the reading or my last notes for five minutes.
- ☐ I wrote down one question I hope the class answers.
- ☐ I'm sitting where I can see the board and hear clearly.
- ☐ My phone is silenced and out of sight.

During class

- ☐ I listen for signals: "the main point is," "there are four causes," anything repeated or written on the board.
- ☐ I write ideas in my own words, not every word said.
- ☐ I write down the examples the instructor uses.
- ☐ When I miss something I leave a gap and mark it with ?.

After class, the same day

- ☐ I filled the gaps from the slides, the reading or a classmate.
- ☐ I wrote cues and questions in the left column.
- ☐ I wrote a two- or three-sentence summary from memory.
- ☐ I took any question I still have to office hours or email.

Laptop or paper? A well-known 2014 study found longhand note-takers did better on conceptual questions (Mueller & Oppenheimer). A 2019 replication did not find a clear advantage either way (Morehead, Dunlosky & Rawson). What helps more is writing ideas in your own words, whichever tool you use.