

Study Skills

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Note Taking

Objectives of the Lesson: by the end of this lecture, learners will be able to:

- Developing note taking skills
- Distinguish between different note taking methods
- Organize information into an understandable format

Introduction

Note taking has been an integral part of human development throughout history. Students take notes in schools, academies and universities to preserve information. Note taking is a crucial part of the learning process. It helps students learn, retain, and recall information. Thus, note taking is an important study skill that helps us do better. We need it to call up important information, to review information, and to store that information so we can use it later.

1. Definition of Note Taking

Note-taking is the practice of writing down or otherwise recording key points of information. It is an important part of the research process. Notes taken on class lectures or discussions may serve as study aids, while notes taken during an interview may provide material for an essay, article, or book. It is to record information captured from another source. By taking notes, the writer records the essence of information.

2. Note Taking Methods

There are different note taking methods that can be used. What is important is that learners find a method that works for them and encourages the use of good note-taking qualities and stick with it. The following are some types:

2.1. Outline/Outlining Method

Notes are organized in a structured form. Different topics and subtopics are organized by bullet points, dashes or numbers that means in a form of an outline. It reduces the editing and reviewing time afterwards and the relationship between main topic and subtopics are identified quickly.

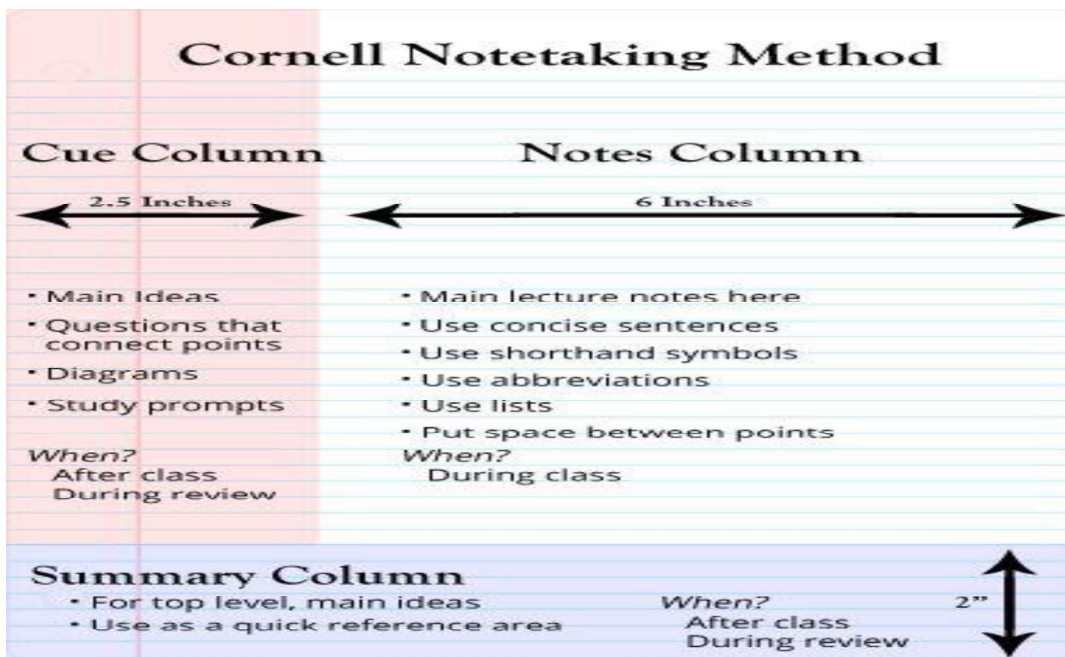
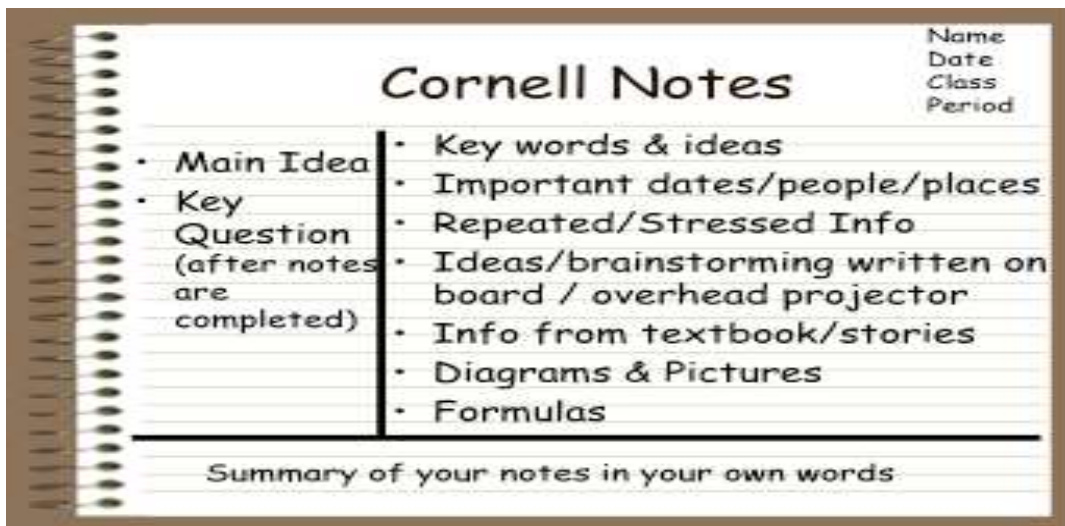
The diagram shows a sheet of lined paper with a vertical red margin line on the left. The text is organized into an outline structure:

- I. Title
 - 1. Subject
 - a. Item 1: Description
 - b. Item 2: Description
 - c. Item 3: ...
 - 2. Subject 2
- II. Title 2
- ...

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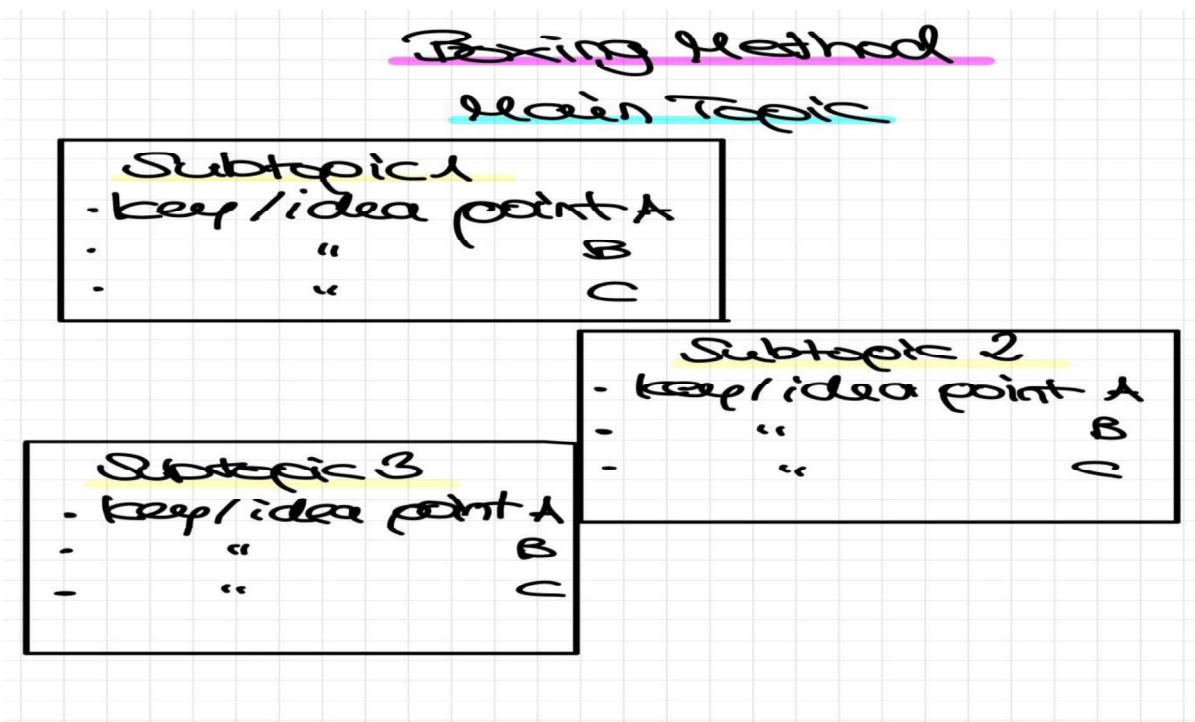
2. 2. Cornell Method

Notes are structured in two columns and one row below. The smaller right column contains the notes associated with the main topic and the bigger left column contains the keywords/questions/hints associated with the notes on the right. The row below summarizes the collected notes. While taking notes use the right column and reviewing your notes in the left column. It is a simple and efficient method to take, review and summarize your notes in a systematic format.



2.3. Boxing Method

All topics/pieces of information that are related to each other are grouped together in a box. The notes in each box can be organized/ structured with another method like the outlining method for example. While taking digital notes e.g. on an iPad or another tablet the boxes can be reorganized, reordered and resized really easily and quickly.

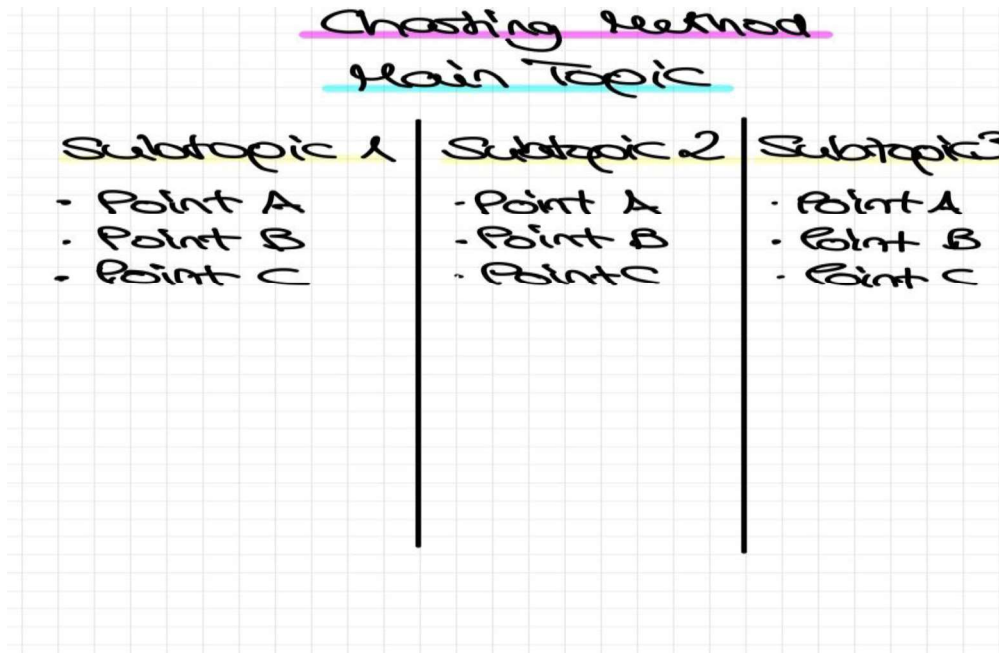


2.4. Charting Method

This method consists of a table of rows and columns. The main topic can be found in the top row and the subtopics/keywords/information are organized in the columns below. Each column categorizes a distinct topic of the main topic. It is a useful method to get an overview over a complex topic especially when a topic covers lots of facts and statistics.

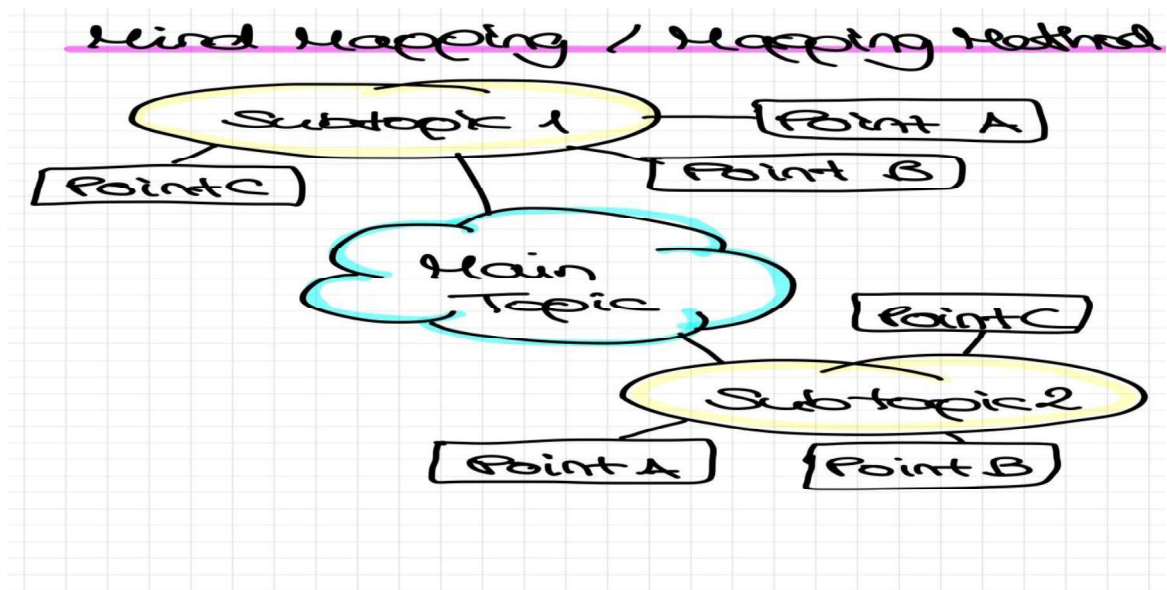
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2. 5. Mapping Method/Mind Mapping

Notes are structured and organized in a visual way. The main topic stands in the middle or on top of the paper. Then the main topic is divided into subtopics around/below the main topic. The subtopics are also divided into branches and can be linked with each other depending on their relationship. Heavy content can be organized with this method in a simple and structured form.



2.6. Sentence Method

Each topic is written in a whole sentence on a separate line. A visual aid, like highlighting the text with different colors, numbering each sentence and organizing main topics by using headings, can be helpful. With this method lots of details and information can be covered in a quick way.

3. Benefits of Effective Note Taking

Researchers found that if important information was contained in notes, it had around 34% chance of being remembered. Information not found in notes had only a five percent chance of being remembered (Howe, 1970 as cited in Longman & Atkinson, 1999).

- Improves focus and attention to detail. Developing note-taking skills engages a student, requiring them to focus and increase their attention to detail, and as we all know, the devil is in the detail.
- Promotes active learning. By taking effective notes, students are actively involved in the learning process thus giving it a purpose and increasing productivity.
- Boosts comprehension and retention. A proven method of increasing memory retention, note-taking can also increase comprehension by breaking down the content for a student to consume easily.
- Teaches prioritizing skills. Often overlooked in its importance, it is essential for a student to be able to select important material and discard unnecessary content. This further adds to their organizational and creativity skills.
- Extends attention span. Proven to extend a student's attention span, a necessary tool in any learning situation.

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- Improves organization skills. By prioritizing content and organizing effectively, a student develops key organization strengths. As teachers are well aware, organization is of a key importance.
- Increases creativity. Equipped with the ability to organize their ideas effectively, focus on a particular subject and expand on ideas through knowledge retention, students can use their own initiative increasing creativity and innovation.

Note Taking is a critical for learners' success. Students need to choose the method that suits them best and practise it very often. The more they practise, the more proficient will become.

Exercise

- In your opinion, what is the most effective note taking strategy? Why?
- What is challenging about note taking?