Success Center

Directed Learning Activity

Cornell Note Taking

SS002.1

Directed Learning Activity – Introduction to the Cornell Note-Taking System

Description: ***Students with strong note-taking skills have a clear advantage in college. You may feel that you spend so much time during lecture just trying to write down everything the professor is saying that you have no time to think about what you are writing. Some students struggle in college because they have never learned an effective way to record and organize the volume of information presented during most lectures. As a college student, you will need to perfect your method of note-taking. Taking notes in an organized, systematic way can dramatically improve your academic performance*****.***

Remember, like any skill, note-taking develops with practice. This Directed Learning Activity (DLA) is an adaptation of the Cornell Note-Taking System that can be used while reading an excerpt from a college text. This method will require you to actively participate in the process of making meaning from the reading and to interact more deeply with the text. You will gain a richer and fuller understanding of what you read. After you have completed this activity, you will need to make a commitment to practice this method for creating study notes for your lectures**.***

Step One: Understanding Why the Cornell Note-Taking System Is Effective

Read this description of the Cornell Note-Taking System. Then, look at the two sample note-taking pages so you can visualize the end product.

The Cornell Note-Taking System uses a simple three-step process. It was developed by Walter Pauk, a professor at Cornell University. This method brings results because you are working with the information in several ways, not just writing it down and putting it away. Because you are actively participating in the process of making meaning from reading and interacting with text deeply, you will create notes that are organized, thorough, and easy to understand. The key to this system is that you do not rewrite complete sentences. You summarize main ideas and use abbreviations, instead. Your first attempt here doesn't have to be perfect. You will get better the more you practice.

Step Two: Organizing Notes With the Cornell Method

Attached to this activity is a blank template to practice taking notes on an excerpt from an abnormal psychology textbook. Be sure to annotate the text (write symbols and comments on the textbook page) in addition to taking notes on that template. Reflect on this activity by answering the questions following the practice.

The Cornell method is only one of many ways of taking notes. You may already have your own technique for taking notes, or you may not yet have settled on a method. Ultimately, you will want to use the note-taking method that works well for you. For the moment, though, it is worthwhile to experiment with the Cornell Note-Taking System by following these seven steps.

- **Preview** the excerpt "Schizophrenia," adapted from the textbook *Abnormal Psychology*. Look at headings and words in bold or italics to get an overview of the passage.

- **Write questions with cue words.** Turn headings or italicized words into questions, and write these on the *left-hand side* of your paper. Instead of questions, you can also write key words. Leave spaces after each concept so you can take notes.
- **Read and mark important ideas.** Read the material with the purpose of locating the answers to your study questions. Annotate the ideas found in the passage.
- **Write answers to questions.** Write the answers to your questions on the *right-hand side* of your notes. You can make more space for your notes by using abbreviations. You do not have to write in complete sentences.
- **Review.** Cover your answers with a piece of paper. Read the questions and test yourself by reciting the answers in your own words.
- **Summarize.** After you read, condense the key topic of the chapter into a few sentences.
- **Review your notes.** A word of advice: Review your notes after you make them – the same day, if possible. Cover the right-hand side of your notes and see if you can recite the notes in your own words when they are covered up. Review your notes before and after class.

If, after reading this detailed description of Cornell Notes, you're still having a hard time imagining what they look like, remember that there are sample note pages for an algebra class and a history class attached to this DLA. They will give you an idea of what to do as you take notes on "Schizophrenia" on the template.

Step Three: Reflecting on Cornell Note-Taking.

After completing Step Two of this activity, thoughtfully reflect on what you have learned. Consider the following questions and discuss them with the tutor.

1. In your own words, what are Cornell Notes?

2. How can you use Cornell Notes to help you to *comprehend* your textbook and to *focus* on the information in it that will help you succeed in class?

3. How could you use the Cornell Note-Taking System to succeed in your other courses?

PRINT STUDENT NAME **STUDENT #**

Tutor Feedback:

_____ **The student successfully completed the Cornell Note-Taking template by filling in the "Note," "Question," and "Summary" sections.**

_____ **The student was able to explain the usefulness of this note-taking system.**

_____ **The student was able to give a thoughtful answer as to how this system can be applied in his or her college courses.**

Additional Comments:

PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME **DATE**

INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE