

## Guide to active reading and effective note-taking\*

**You are responsible for reading the assigned chapters and taking your own notes ahead of time** (due dates will be provided). This is part of the learning process.

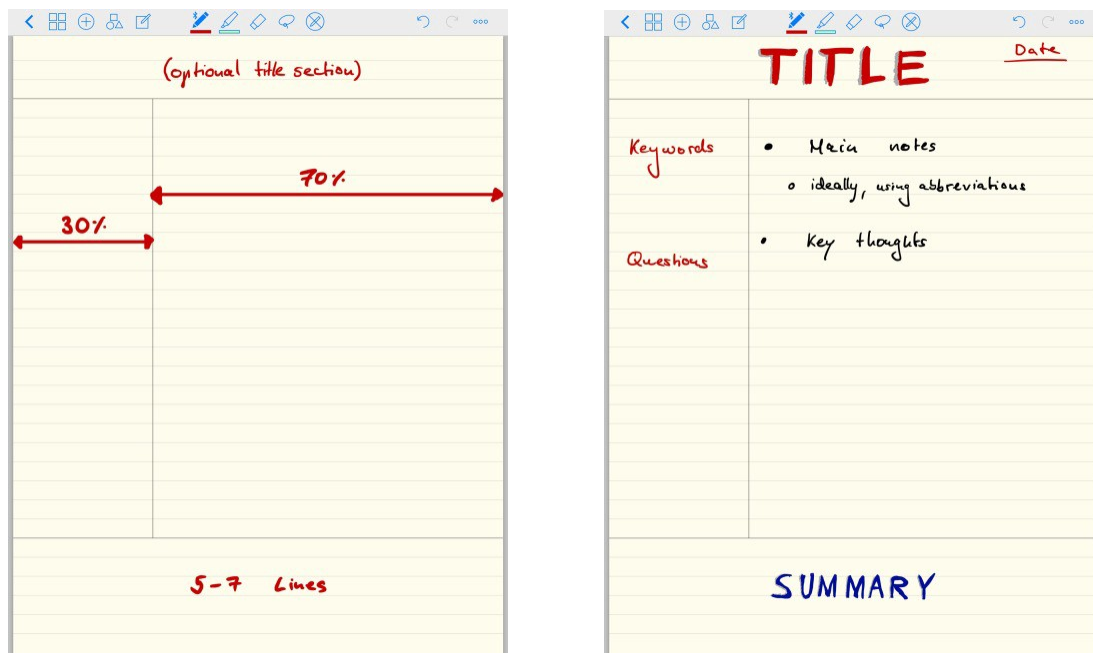
I don't expect you to master the material on your own with this process, but I will assume you've read the material and taken notes by the date provided. Whether you notice it or not, this process will help your long-term learning of the material.

### 1. SURVEY: SKIM HEADINGS, CAPTIONS, AND HIGHLIGHTED INFORMATION.

Before reading the actual chapter, you want to get an idea of the general structure and content. Look at the subsection titles in the Table of Contents. Read the introduction and summary (if given) of the assigned reading. Skim through the chapter paying attention to section headings, bold or italicized words, figures and graphs and their captions. Skip over any examples for now.

### 2. OUTLINE: PREPARE YOUR NOTEBOOK.

Prepare your Cornell note page by dividing it into sections as shown below. I recommend making your header the chapter number and chapter title (you will likely end up with multiple pages per chapter).



### 3. QUESTION: PREPARE YOUR MIND.

Write down the title of the book section you are reading in the Notes side of your Cornell page (larger right-hand column), and turn it into a question in your mind. This will give you a specific purpose for reading the material and thereby increase comprehension. It will bring to mind information already known, thus helping you to understand that section more quickly. The question will also make important points stand out

\*This information is modified only slightly from different resources to make it more specific to this course. The wording is almost entirely from the following articles:

1. [How to study and take notes from a textbook using the Cornell note-taking method](#)
2. [Cornell Note Taking - The Best Way To Take Notes Explained](#)
3. [Radford University Knowledge Center: SQ5R Reading Method](#)

at the same time that explanatory detail is recognized as such. Begin asking yourself who, what, where, when, why, and how questions. Questions are most beneficial when they are general, covering main topics and important points.

#### **4. READ/RESPOND: READ ONE SECTION AT A TIME.**

Break the material into sections if sections aren't already defined. Going section by section, read to answer the questions you formulated in Step 3, taking down only the big ideas (no specific details yet) and see if you can write down a short summary (a few sentences) of an entire section in your own words. Then go back through the text, taking down additional key information. Write down important concepts and definitions in a bulleted form for easier review later. Minor details can also be written in an indented form, with dashes, numbering, etc, and you can draw shapes, small diagrams, or images to aid you in remembering the information.

Treat examples as self-quizzes: try to work through example problems on your own as much as possible without referring back to the text or notes, then check your process/progress after.

After each section, think about the material you have just read and answer the questions you have asked. This can be done at the same time as the reading step, since often response is automatic. The main point of this step is to think about the material, and take notice of what is important.

#### **5. PREP/RECORD: FORMULATE QUESTIONS AND KEYWORDS FOR REVIEW.**

In the smaller column on the left-hand side of the page, jot down questions that can be answered based on what you've written, and keywords or comments that will help when you review your notes later.

#### **6. RECITE: PRACTICE SUMMARIZING WITHOUT LOOKING.**

After each section, look away from the material and try to recite the key information and ideas. Put the material in your own words and go back and re-read until you feel comfortable with it. This may be frustrating at first, but it will lead to better understanding and save you review time in the long run.

#### **7. REPEAT AND SUMMARIZE.**

Repeat this process for each section of the text. When you run out of room in the notes section of your Cornell page, take a few moments to summarize the notes on the page in the bottom section. When you reach the end of the chapter, create an additional summary of the chapter itself, not just the notes on that particular page.

#### **8. REVIEW REGULARLY.**

After completing the entire chapter, scan back over the reading and review the information aloud or in your head. Talk about the material with a classmate if possible. Try to identify overall themes and relationships between concepts. Make any necessary revisions of your notes or markings so they can be easily understood later.

Check your understanding by working through examples and practice problems in the text, attempting to answer the questions and define the terms you wrote in your notes on the left-hand column without looking at your notes.

Repeat this process every couple days when you first learn the material, and then try more spaced practice (every few weeks) when you feel more comfortable with the material.