

# How to Read Effectively and Take Better Notes

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# Part I



## Effective Reading Strategies

# Common Thoughts About Reading

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- ❖ I have to read every word
- ❖ Reading once is enough
- ❖ It is sinful to skip passages in reading
- ❖ Machines are necessary to improve my reading speed
- ❖ If I skim or read too rapidly my comprehension will drop
- ❖ There is something about my eyes that keeps me from reading fast
- ❖ Are each of the above True or False?

# Are you distracted while reading?

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What is your work environment like?

- ❖ Too cluttered?
- ❖ Too noisy?
- ❖ Too quiet?
- ❖ Too comfortable?

Important to think about what kind of environment is best for you to be productive

Ways to modify your work environment:

- ❖ Have only essential materials in front of you
- ❖ Find a quieter space without talking or people typing in the background
- ❖ Move to an environment with moderate background noise if this helps you focus

# Strategies for Improving Slow Reading

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- ❖ Skimming
- ❖ Scanning
- ❖ Breaking down your reading into smaller more manageable sections
- ❖ Read more difficult subjects first- as motivation to continue reading easier subjects after that
- ❖ Set attainable work goals- work for a set time (25 mins), take a break (5 mins), repeat the cycle

# More Strategies for Improving Slow Reading

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- ❖ Try Speed Reading Websites or Apps
- ❖ Sprizlet.com- web app that you can bookmark, click on and use with whatever screen you are on to “speed read” the text
- ❖ Readsy.co - this website allows you to upload documents, paste in websites(like for web-based articles) or paste text from another source
- ❖ Quiz yourself at the end of a section of reading:
- ❖ Are you able to answer the “what is the main idea or take away from what I just read”?
- ❖ If not, break your reading into a smaller section and try quizzing yourself again

# Ways to Read More Effectively

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- ❖ Use strategies based upon how much time you have to complete your reading
- ❖ For example:
- ❖ 5 mins before class
- ❖ 20 mins before class
- ❖ 1 hour the night before
- ❖ 3 hours the weekend before
- ❖ Try using screen reading software to listen to your reading(s)
- ❖ Natural Reader, Kurzweil, JAWS
- ❖ These programs allow you to alter the reading speed
- ❖ Can modify the voice used to help maintain your focus

# References

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*Learning Outside the Lines* by Jonathan Mooney and David Cole

*Six Reading Myths* Academic Skills Center, Dartmouth College 2001 by Martha Maxwell



# Part II



## Note-Taking Skill Building

# Warm up...

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1. Selecting the note-taking techniques to use should be informed by all of the following *except*:
  - a. the subject
  - b. your level of expertise in that technique
  - c. your personality style
  - d. what the instructor prefers
2. Quote all of the following information *except*:
  - a. key points
  - b. long passages
  - c. subtle ideas
  - d. examples of powerful writing
3. When should you pay attention during a lecture to capture key points?
  - a. in the beginning
  - b. in the middle
  - c. in the end
  - d. in the beginning and end

4. When you make an outline, you are:
  - a. actively thinking about the information you are hearing or reading
  - b. simply recording facts
  - c. writing as much as you can
  - d. arranging the information from most to least important
5. If you have a learning disability,:
  - a. tape record all lectures rather than trying to take notes
  - b. have someone else takes notes for you
  - c. stick to only one method of note taking
  - d. try special techniques to find the ones that work best for you

# Why take notes?

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**G**uides your studying

**R**emember what you read or heard

**R**einforces learning

# What to write?

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## Direct Quotations

- Verbatim
- Surround with quotes
- Even include mistakes [sic]
- I.e. In the book, Evslin writes, “His most dramatic hour was when he kidnaped [sic] Persephone...” (21).
- **When to? Powerful memorable words**

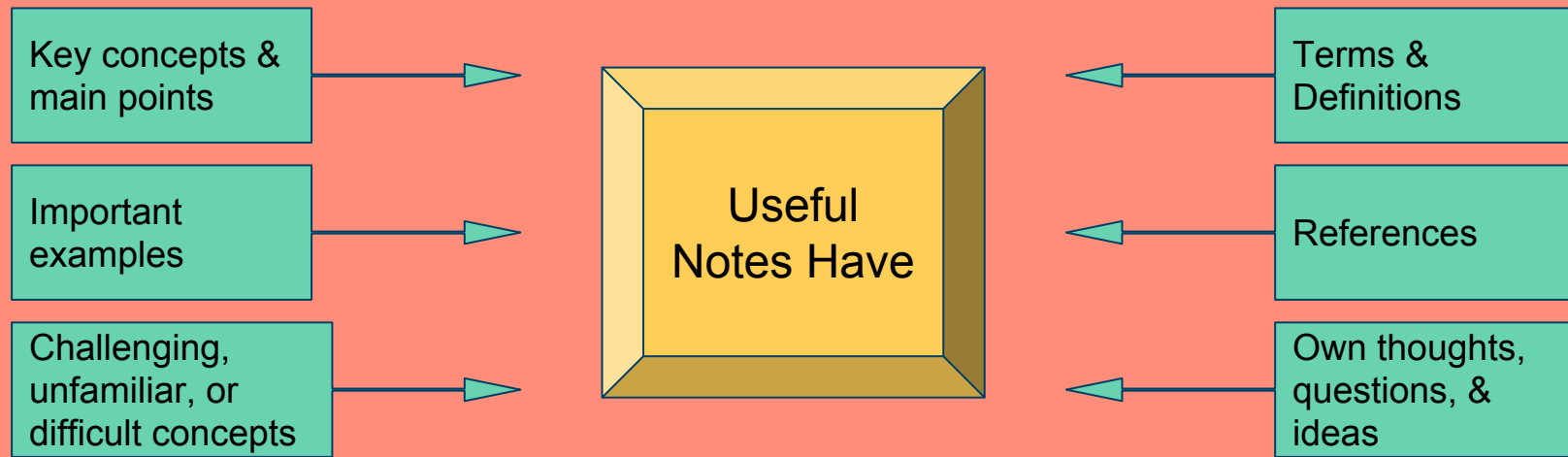
## Summaries

- Background information, comments explanations, evaluations, arguments
- Questions about the material
- **When to? Shorten version of main ideas, dates, numbers, names, key details**

## Paraphrase

- **Restatement of the writer's words.**
- I.e. The author wanted the kidnapping of Persephone to be the ultimate illustration of our protagonist's malicious character.

# Effective notes include:



*(Listening note taking strategies, 2018)*

# #1 Rule: Keep Notes Brief!

## SYMBOLS & ABBREVIATIONS FOR NOTE TAKING

<b>&amp;</b>	and	<b>govt</b>	government
<b>=</b>	is, are I	<b>mpt</b>	important
<b>≈</b>	about, approximately	<b>ea</b>	each
<b>&gt;</b>	more than	<b>tho</b>	though
<b>&lt;</b>	less than	<b>thro</b>	through
<b>#</b>	number	<b>probs</b>	problems
<b>x</b>	times	<b>min</b>	minimum, least
<b>→</b>	leads to, caused	<b>max</b>	maximum, most
<b>Δ</b>	change	<b>btwn</b>	between
<b>/</b>	or	<b>bkgd</b>	background
<b>∴</b>	therefore	<b>vs</b>	versus, against
<b>↑</b>	increase, grow, gain	<b>qty</b>	quantity (amount)
<b>↓</b>	decrease, loss	<b>hv</b>	have
<b>♀</b>	female, woman, girl	<b>N.B.</b>	note well (important)
<b>♂</b>	male, man, boy	<b>e.g.</b>	for example
<b>yrs</b>	years	<b>i.e.</b>	that is
<b>@</b>	at	<b>cp (cf)</b>	compare
<b>w/</b>	with	<b>ct</b>	contrast
<b>w/o</b>	without	<b>B4</b>	before
<b>w/i</b>	within	<b>p</b>	after
<b>wrt</b>	with respect to	<b>q</b>	every
<b>re:</b>	regarding	<b>ASAP</b>	as soon as possible
<b>b/c</b>	because	<b>STAT</b>	immediately
<b>s/t</b>	something	<b>f</b>	frequently (often)
<b>s/o</b>	someone		

# Strategies

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## Before Lecture: Be prepared

- Know the weekly topic
- Do the pre-reading
- Have slides ready
- Review previous notes
- Set-up paper for note-taking
- Arrive on time and sit near the front
- Eat and get sleep!

## During Lecture: Take notes

- Actively listening
- Mind wanders, notice and bring attention back to the present
- Be selective with notes
  - Intro “big picture”
  - Verbal “signposts”
  - Repetition
  - Phonological cues
  - Final remarks

## After Lecture: Review notes

- Legible and tidy up
- Fill in missing info
- Code-with colors and symbols
- Simplify meaning of diagrams, charts, processes
- Label & file notes with handouts
- “What do I need further clarification on?”

*(Listening note taking strategies, 2018)*

# Methods

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## Divided Page Format

- Cornell method
- Split page
- Discussion columns
- T-method

## Concepts Maps/ Webbing/Diagrams

- Visual
- Pictures
- Illustrations of processes
- View connections
- Use signifiers

## Charts/Graphs

- Synthesize information
- Great for study guides and after lecture notes
- Observe at a glance
- Develop ideas

## Outline

- Categorize and arrange information
- Forces you to engage with the content
- Helps to fix it in your mind
- Structuring essays

## Lists/Boxing

- Series of facts
- Same importance
- Bulleted or hyphenated
- Group items into themes
- Visual focus



# Cornell Method

## Pros:

- A quick way to take, review, and organize notes
- Summarizes all the information in a systematic manner
- Helps to absorb in a short time
- Helps to extract main ideas
- Cuts down time for reviewing

## Cons:

- Pages need to be prepared before a lecture
- Requires time

Title		(Date)
Key Terms/ Questions?	Abbreviated notes, main ideas, key thoughts  (During Lecture)	
Summary - (after lecture)		

# Split-Page

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Professor's Notes/Handouts

Your Notes

Questions?

# Discussion Columns

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Questions?	Professor's Comments	Student Comments Yours and peers

# T-Method

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Notes

(During Lecture)

Summary

(After Lecture)

Questions?

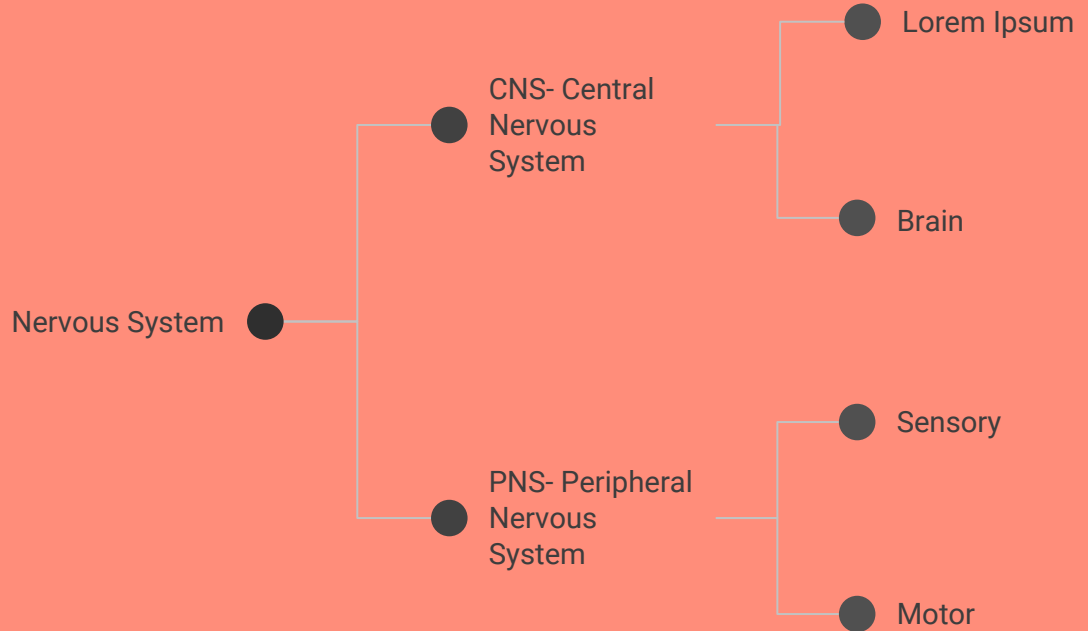
# Concept Mapping/Webbing/Diagrams

## Pros:

- Visually appealing
- Used to depict detailed information in a concise form
- Allows room for changes

## Cons:

- Take a lot of space on a page
- Can be confusing if the information is wrongly placed



# Charts

## Pros:

- Structured
- Great for reviews
- Notes are comparable
- Memorize a lot of info quickly

## Cons:

- Time-consuming method
- Requires clear content
- Categorizable content and given in advance of lecture

Method	Description	When to Use?	Pros	Cons
Divided page				
Concept mapping/webbing				
Charts/Graphs				
Outline				
Lists				

# Outline

## Pros:

- Highlights key points in a logical way
- Allows for ease of focus
- Reduces reviewing and editing time
- Proper and clean structure

## Cons:

- Not suitable for courses comprised of formulas and charts
- Requires lecture to have a certain structure

## I. Topic name

### A. Main Idea 1

1. Supporting detail 1
  - a) Example
  - b) Example
2. Supporting detail 2
  - a) Example
  - b) Example

### B. Main Idea 2

1. Supporting detail 1
  - a) Example
2. Supporting detail 1
  - a) Example

## II. Topic name

### A. Main idea 1

### B. Main idea 2

# Lists/Boxing

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## Pros:

- Segregates and organizes
- Focus on one box at a time while reading
- Helps you memorize the relation between notes

## Cons:

- Not suitable for every lecture type
- Requires topics that can be assigned into groups
- Requires additional time to group at the end or during the lecture

### Theme/Topic 1

- detail
- detail
- detail

### Theme/Topic 2

- detail
- detail
- detail



# Other Techniques

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PDF/Lumin Google Drive Extension

Voice Typing

Sensus Access

Combine mediums converted PDF and Audio  
file/screen reader

PowerPoint Slides

Digital Resources

<http://spritzlet.com/> - Web app that you bookmark and, when you click it, will pop onto whatever screen you're on and begin "speed reading" the text.

<http://www.readsy.co/> - Upload documents, paste in URLs (for web-based articles), or paste text from another source.

# References

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*Listening note taking strategies*. (2018 August 8). Retrieved from <https://student.unsw.edu.au/note-taking-skills>

Rozakis, L. (2003). *Test-taking strategies and study skills for the utterly confused*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

*The Best Note-Taking Methods: For college students & serious note-takers*. (2018 May 9). Retrieved from <https://medium.goodnotes.com/the-best-note-taking-methods-for-college-students-451f412e264e>