



Strat-O-Grams

A newsletter of research-based strategies for
Belton School District students, teachers and parents

Learning Strategies- Note taking

Topics:

- Abbreviations
- Shorthand
- Guided notes
- Double-column/ Cornell Note taking system
- Three-column system



A common difficulty most students face when beginning to write notes is that they write too much. These students write too much because they have difficulty identifying the main idea and/or important details. When students write too much they lose their ability to listen effectively.

One way for teachers to solve this problem is to provide completed notes or a summary of the material to students in advance. Research, however, indicates that providing completed notes may not be the most effective way to assist students (Hamilton, Seibert, Gardner, & Talbert-Johnson, 2000).

Studies have found that students who take notes and review them perform better academically than those who do not take notes. Further, students who used (Guided notes) outline notes, which contain an outline of the major points and subtopics with some points missing, or matrix notes, which provide a visual display of major points and subtopics, were the most likely to recall and synthesize information.

Eventually, every student must take notes independently. They must learn to be focused in their efforts; they must write down fewer words without sacrificing understanding. Teachers can instruct students how to take notes using modified shorthand or abbreviations.

Sample Abbreviations/shorthand:

Note taking short hand/abbreviations. Add your own as you begin to use them
w/= with w/o= without x= time <= less than >= more than
app= application/appropriate schl=school ?= question/don't know/unclear
@= at ^= increase à= yields/gives you/result
three dots in a pyramid shape = therefore
leave out vowels when taking notes – vowels= vwls

Double-Column Notetaking, also known as the Cornell Notetaking system is an effective way for students to take notes in class and out of textbooks. An example follows that uses the method of Double-Column notetaking to explain how to use the system.



Double-Column Notetaking or Cornell Notetaking System

What format must be followed?

Key words and questions are written on the left side and explanations, definitions, and answers are written on the right side.
 Only take notes on one side of the paper
 Keep notes in a three ring binder
 Draw a line down the left one-third of the paper.
 After writing notes, read them over and write questions on the left-hand side (answers will be on the right-hand side)

The back of the paper can be used for additional clarifications, comments by the teacher

Leave space at the top of the paper

List four points which show relationships of ideas in double-column notes.

1. Start main ideas at the margin; indent details about the main points.
2. Skip lines to show a change in topic
3. Use indentions and white space to show major and minor details rather than outlining symbols. Use numbers judiciously to emphasize a listing. Express ideas in phrases-not complete sentences. Eliminate unnecessary words.

List six types of signals to improve the effectiveness of your notes.

Everything the teacher put on the board.
 Definitions
 Lists
 Points marked by emphasis words such as

- “the most important...”

“this would be a good test question”

Repeated points
 Hints given by the teacher’s tone of voice

- Louder Quieter

State examples in your own words

Why is it important to continue taking notes during the entire class?

Ask a question if the idea is unclear.

Assignments, notifications of tests and other important information are usually given at the end of the class.

When is the best time to review notes?

Review your notes soon after class-the ideas will be fresh in your mind.

- Gaps can be filled in
- Illegible words can be rewritten
- Notes can be used to study or review what was learned

Bos and Vaughn (2002) have suggested a note-taking strategy called the three-column system which places more responsibility on the student. Students must form key concepts and single-sentence summaries in preparation for classes in which they will take notes to multi-paragraph summaries of reading notes when processing the experience following the class. This strategy encourages students to avoid passive summarizing strategies such as highlighting or underlining which often have little value (Custer et al., 1990; Devine, 1987).

Sample Three-Column Note-taking System:

Name: _____ Topic: _____ Class: _____		
Key Concepts Source: _____ (Complete before class)	Class Notes Date: _____ (Complete during class)	Reading Notes Source: _____ (Complete after class)
One sentence summary:	One paragraph summary:	Two paragraph summary:

To stress the importance of the note-taking process teachers and parents need to include mental activities to use before, during, and after the lecture. For example, the **Think-Pair-Share** (Kagan, 1994), strategy encourages students to (a) **think** silently about a problem, topic, or question (b) **pair** with another student to discuss the answer, and (c) **share** the most important points. Another strategy is the **K-W-L** (Ogle, 1986), which requires students to monitor their understanding before (“What do I **K**now” and “What do I **W**ant to Learn?”) and after (“What did I **L**earn?”). Students can share their K-W-Ls with others to develop additional questions that the group should seek to answer (prediction of possible test questions).

Sources:

KU Special Connections
Plano, Texas Strategy Handbook
Bos and Vaughn
Hannibal, Siebert, Gardner & Talbert and Johnson
Custer, et. al
Devine