

Cornell Note-Taking – Enhanced Content Learning

Learning Outcome: Students will become better note-takers and will review the course content on a regular basis.

Summary: Students were presented a PowerPoint about Cornell note-taking. They practiced the skill in class and were tested about it on an assessment.

Procedure:

1. A poll was taken and it showed that about 25% of the students in the class had learned this technique in high school.
2. An Avid powerpoint¹ on Cornell Note-Taking was reviewed with the class.
3. After a brief discussion, the students were requested to practice this technique for the next 10 minutes as they listened to the lecture.
4. The students then reviewed the notes and talked with each other about the content.
5. The students were instructed to follow the “10-24-7” rule, and continue using the technique.
6. The students were tested on the procedure as a short-answer question on the exam.

Example Application: In the Freshman Seminar course “AIDS and Society” the students used this technique on a lecture on “Biological Molecules.”

Outcome and Impressions: This technique did not work well. The students did not follow the format in successive lectures. I don’t believe that the students reviewed the notes until exam time. It may work better if periodically the instructor checks to insure that the students are following the technique.

Additional Experience

To introduce students to the method of note-taking and review named “Cornell Notes”, a summary of the technique was presented using a Power Point presentation composed by Avid. Many students had been exposed to this technique in High School, but some students in the class did not know it. Immediately after the presentation describing the technique, a 3-minute video was shown and students were instructed to take notes on the content of the video. After watching the video once, the instructor Asked students to share with the rest of the class the main ideas learned and written as notes. Most students were not able to recall the main message, and some students had not written anything at all.

Many students expressed their dislike towards the method of note-taking. For this technique to work, students need not just to take notes, but also to review them and to expand them. To get students into the habit of taking notes during class and to review them at home, it will be helpful to collect notes sporadically and to grade them.

Additional Experience

Many students were already familiar with Cornell Notes. As a refresher, or for students who were not familiar with the method, a lecture constructed by AVID was presented to students. Emphasis was placed on the graph that illustrates percent retention at 30 days post-lecture when following the 24-10-7 rule (retention approaches 100%) compared to not following the rule (retention is around 10%). After this lecture, a lecture on the course subject matter was presented, and students were required to use the Cornell Note format to take notes. At certain points in the lecture, students were given the opportunity to “think-pair-share” (compare notes with the person next to them). Students were instructed to review and process their notes per the Cornell method after class.

Students indicated that they did not enjoy the Cornell Notes method due to the time required for maximum benefit, though they did see the theoretical benefit to the method (near 100% retention 30 days post-lecture). This lesson worked fine as written; however, changes are suggested for future use. As executed this first time, processed notes were not collected, providing students little immediate incentive to complete the Cornell Notes process. In the future, students will be given a short amount of time in class to begin processing their notes, and fully processed notes will be collected at the next class period (either photocopies or scanned entries) for a grade. In addition, additional discussion will take place on the importance of synthesizing questions (identifying the main ideas) on the lecture material. This will help students identify the main ideas of the lecture and also help them understand that merely reading or re-writing the notes is not sufficient.

References

Ebbinghaus, H. 1895. *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*.

<http://www.avid.org/default.aspx> Need a proper reference for the PowerPoint file.

1 The AVID Powerpoint presentation is available through the CTLE Blackboard page.