

## TRANSCRIPTION PODCAST # 6

Hello and welcome to our series of podcasts on Listening strategies for French Immersion students produced by from the faculty at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa.

This podcast is part of a series to help you improve your listening strategies and provide practical hints on note taking in the context of academic courses in your second language.

### Podcast # 6: The Cornell Note-taking System

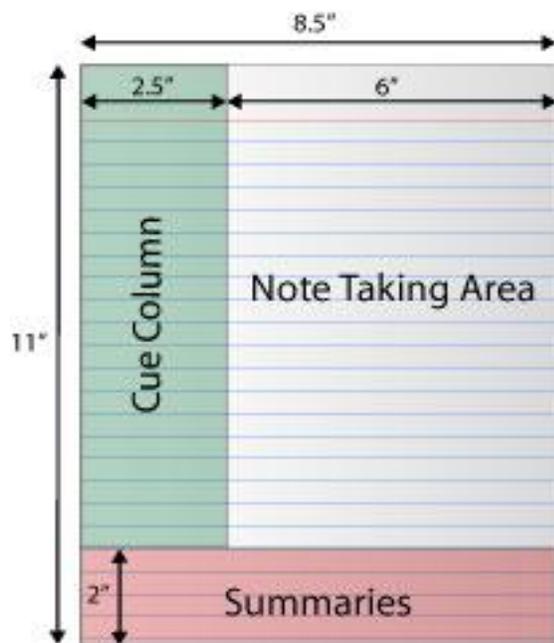
This podcast will present the six stages of the Cornell note taking system. Be aware that not all six stages may work for you. You can choose the parts that suit your learning style the best.

**Student:** What is the Cornell note-taking system?

**Prof:** In 1989 Walter Pauk of Cornell University developed a note-taking system to help students take better notes and learn more efficiently. Today, Pauk's note taking technique, known as the Cornell note taking system, is widely taught throughout Canada. Pauk outlines six steps in his system:

- Record
- Reduce (or question)
- Recite
- Reflect
- Review
- Recapitulate

In the Cornell note taking system, the note page is divided into three sections.



*Section 1*, the right side of the paper, is the note taking area. It is the largest section, approximately 6 inches wide and 9 inches high. It is here in this section of the paper that you write your lecture or textbook notes.

*Section 2*, the left side of your paper, is called the cue column. You leave it blank while you read or listen but you'll use it later as you review. At that time, you can fill it in with comments that highlight the main ideas, clarify meanings, give examples, or link ideas. You can also draw diagrams here.

*Section 3* is the summary area which is completed after class, when you review your notes. It should be 2-inches high at the bottom of the page. Here you write main ideas for quick reference to summarize the notes on the page. When you review, use this section to reinforce concepts and provide an overview.

**Student:** OK You said the first step was called “record”. What do you do in the Record step?

**Prof:** After separating your page into these three sections, you then record as many facts and ideas as you can in the large note taking area, during the lecture. Don't try to write down all the exact words of the lecture. And, don't worry about making spelling mistakes. Just write down in point form the most important ideas of the lecture. Use abbreviations and symbols if those are helpful.

**Student:** What does the Reduce (or Question) step involve?

**Prof:** This next step is done shortly after class when you are reviewing and improving your class notes. Write down key points and formulate questions about the lecture in the cue column to the left of the notes section. These will act as memory cues so that when you review, you will remember the key ideas.

**Student:** I'm not sure I understand the Recite phase...

**Prof:** Well, reciting means actually speaking out loud and articulating *in your own words* the facts and ideas you are trying to learn. Research shows that recitation out loud of the material to be learned is a very effective technique for remembering information. Restating the material in your own words forces you to think about and understand the meaning of the new concepts.

**Student:** How is this done in practice?

**Prof:** Well, this is where the cue column comes into play. First, cover the main notes section. Then, read each key word, phrase or question from the cue column and state out loud what meaning you think that phrase is supposed to suggest from the notes. If you are confident that your answer is correct, continue on to the next cue phrase or question. Otherwise, take a peek at the main notes section to make sure you understand fully what the lecturer said. Essentially, you're quizzing yourself using the words in the cue column, and then checking in the main notes section how well you've recited the material.

**Student:** How is the Reflect step different from the Recite step?

**Prof:** In a way, the reciting step is more about remembering what was in the lecture. But to really learn new material, you have to reflect upon it or think about it. When you recited out loud in your own words, you made the information your own. Now you are going a step further by thinking about why it may be important or significant and how this new information relates to and increases your existing knowledge. Reflecting in this way deepens your understanding of the lecture ideas.

**Student:** I think I understand the Review step.

Yes—but it should really be called “regular review.” It is important to review and recite your notes routinely in order to hold onto what you have learned and to allow better overall comprehension and retention. These regular reviews will make it easier for you to prepare for mid-terms and exams. Again, the notes should be recited out loud in your own words for maximum learning effectiveness. Regular repetition leads to better retention.

**Student:** What about the Recapitulate step?

In this step, you summarize or recapitulate your notes in the summary section at the bottom of the notes page. This is where you condense the essence of the lecture in your own words — it’s not just a simple extract from your notes above. In other words, you’re reformulating rather than just regurgitating. The cue points along the side of the page help you work with and understand all the material, while this summary section highlights only the most important points to be remembered. In the same way that you summarize a page of notes at the bottom of each page, you should also summarize the most important points of a lecture on the last page of the lecture notes .

Let’s summarize the six stages of the Cornell Note Taking System.

1. Record during the lecture by writing down in point form the professor’s main points and examples. Use abbreviations where possible and sentence fragments if necessary. After the lecture you can improve your notes by making them more legible and comprehensible.
2. Reduce or Question by writing in your own words key phrases or questions to serve as cues for the notes taken in class.
3. Recite. When reviewing your notes, cover the main notes and recite out loud, in your own words, the facts or ideas brought to mind by each cue phrase or question.
4. Reflect by thinking about the significance of what you have learned and how it increases your existing knowledge.
5. Review your notes regularly to improve your retention.
6. Recapitulate in your own words both the main ideas of the notes page on the page summary section, and the main ideas of the complete lecture on the page at the end of the lecture.

There are many examples of the Cornell Note Taking System available through Google. Use these examples to explore what part or parts of the system you would like to incorporate into your own studies.

To conclude, in this podcast you have learned the six steps used in the Cornell system of note-taking. Again it is up to you to find out which of these work best for you and to implement the most useful of these techniques.

Thank you for listening to this podcast on effective listening strategies brought to you by from the faculty at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa.

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