



## Useful Note-Taking by Dr. Henry Khiat, UniSIM

The ability to take useful notes during seminars and for readings is an important study skill. Your notes are only useful if they are clear and comprehensive enough for you to write your assignments and to revise for your examinations.

There are many forms of note-taking such as mapping, highlighting, shorthand or annotation. The Cornell System of Taking Notes is one of the most popular and effective methods of note-taking adopted by university students. It was devised in the 1950s by Walter Pauk, an education professor at Cornell University. In this article, the effective use of Cornell Note Sheet is described.

The design of the Cornell Note Sheet (A4 size paper) is as below.

### Cornell Note Sheet

<b>Cue Column</b>	<b>Notes Area</b>
<b>Summary Area</b>	



## What to record in the Cornell Note Sheet?

Cue Column	Notes Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the ideas or facts to <b>Cue Words</b> for effective memorisation.</li><li>• Questions can be created by you to clarify your understanding of any ideas and facts (<b>Clarification Questions</b>) or to allow you to memorise the facts written in the Notes Area (<b>Recall Questions</b>).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write down <b>short notes</b> gathered from seminars or readings.</li><li>• Do not copy wholesale from the readings. <b>Paraphrase.</b></li><li>• <b>Paraphrasing</b> is an important process in note-taking as it allows you to evaluate and internalise your understanding more effectively.</li><li>• Notes can recorded in words, abbreviations, symbols, diagrams or any other forms.</li><li>• If needed, convert your notes into <b>mapping, branching, flashcards or any other forms</b> that can help you to study better.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary Area</b></p> <p>After you have clarified all your doubts about the written notes in the 'Notes Area', <b>summarise</b> your notes in one or two sentences through <b>paraphrasing</b>.</p>	



## Example of a Cornell Note Sheet

	Cue Column	Notes Area	
<b>Cue words</b>	routine activities theory (RAT)	routine activities theory	<b>Paraphrasing</b>
<b>Recall questions</b>	What is RAT?	RAT states that people may commit predatory crimes by stealing from homes or other places if the environmental conditions below are favourable to them.	
	What cause RAT?	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">The presence of predatory criminals</div> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">The availability of suitable targets</div> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">The absence of capable guardians</div> lead to <b>Routine activities theory</b>	<b>Mapping</b>
	What are the evidences that support RAT?	study showed reduction of homemakers promoted predatory crimes. study showed reduced cost of goods reduce crimes.	
<b>Clarification questions</b>	Check: Are the research more correlational than causal?	RAT can serve as another basis for law enforcement agencies in formulating procedures or policies against predatory crimes.	
<b>Summarise through paraphrasing</b>	<b>Summary Area</b> RAT states that the number of predatory crimes is affected by the level of presence of guardians in potential crime scenes, the cost and ease of selling of items found in the potential crime scenes and the number of of potential law breakers near the potential crime scenes.		

If you can practise the Cornell System of Taking Notes consistently in your course, it can help you to do well in your study.

Finally, if you have other effective note-taking ways, do drop me an email at [henrykhiat@unisim.edu.sg](mailto:henrykhiat@unisim.edu.sg). I can incorporate your experience and update this article so that other students in UniSIM can benefit from it.

### References

Pauks, W. & Owens R.J.Q (2011). *How to study in college*. Boston: Wadsworth.

Seigel, L. J. (2011). *Criminology: The core*. Belmont: Wadsworth.