

# ***UNIT TWO: CORNELL NOTES AND LEARNING LOGS***

## **Cornell Notes**

**W**riting in the AVID elective primarily takes the form of Cornell notes and learning logs. The note-taking system used in AVID is the Cornell note-taking system, which requires students to divide their papers into a narrow left hand margin and a wide right hand margin. Notes are recorded in the right hand margin, while clarifying questions and headings are reserved for the left hand margin. At the end of their notes, students review and write a full paragraph summary. The student binder is a collection of these notes.

### **Tips for Taking Notes**

- Listen for important points.
- Write only important ideas such as names, dates, terms, places, and events.
- Use abbreviations for familiar words.
- Develop study questions and identify main ideas.
- Look up definitions.
- Add symbols or highlight important words and concepts.
- Review overall information.
- Summarize significant ideas in a complete paragraph.
- Write high-level questions on the left side (Costa's levels 2 and 3)

### **Taking Notes from a Textbook**

- Consider how the parts make up the whole—how ideas relate to each other.
- Note what you can learn from pictures and graphs in a given section.
- Be aware of textbook organization - chapters, headings, bold words, and graphics.
- Know where to find the index and glossary.
- Use chapter guiding questions to guide you through the textbook if possible.

### **Taking Notes from a Discussion**

- Use topics and questions introduced by lecturer to guide note-taking.
- Use symbols to identify significant ideas.
- Include your own responses in your notes.
- Develop questions.
- Refer to textbook when connections arise.

## **Taking Notes from Literature and Poetry**

- Include significance of title, publication date, and author information.
- Identify point of view of speaker.
- Identify setting, important characters, plot, conflicts, theme, and any figurative language.
- Highlight significant quotes/passages.
- Identify tone, theme, and poetic devices such as repetition, imagery and allusions.
- Make connections from one chapter/verse to another.
- Predict what might happen next or by the end of the piece.

## **Taking Notes in Mathematics**

- Take notes just as in any other class, with all of the information on the right hand side of the page. Write the problem on the left side and solve it on the right. Then go back and fill in with key terms or example equations.
- As you listen to a lecture, write out any key terms or questions on the left (example: What is the Distance Formula?). Then on the right, give the formula.

## **Taking Notes from a Guest Speaker**

- Identify the speaker's name and title (example: Mrs. Joan Smith, Admissions Counselor for the University of \_\_\_\_\_.)
- Create questions for the speaker the night before the presentation, or while the speaker is speaking. Then ask questions and write your answers on the right hand side of the page, across from the question it answers.
- Write down details of the person's life and/or job.
- Keep track of any obstacles the person faced in his or her life.

## **Taking Notes from a Field Trip**

- Identify the date and location of the field trip.
- Write out a few questions to ask the person giving the tour or leading the experience. Answer them on the right hand side of the paper, across from the question.
- Write out facts about the location (example: If you are going to a college or university, write down how many students attend the school and/or how much it costs to attend).
- Write out your favorite part of the trip and include as part of the summary at the end of note page (example: I really enjoyed touring the library at The University of California, San Diego because it is the largest library I have ever seen.)
- Write down any further questions throughout the field trip. Ask the leader or teacher for answers.

## Tips for Summarizing Cornell Notes

- Tell what is being summarized (chapter, novel, discussion, lecture).
- Create one sentence that gives the main idea.
- Include new information learned.
- Give several important details that explain the main idea.
- Check the summary to make sure the supporting ideas relate to the main idea.
- The summary should be several sentences that demonstrate understanding of the learning experience.
- Any points that still need clarification might also be mentioned in the summary.

## Example Summary for Cornell Notes

*Today in English we learned about the parts of a story. There are several parts of a story: setting, theme, characterization, and point of view. The setting tells when and where the story takes place. The theme is the lesson or main idea of the story. Characterization describes how characters think and feel. Point of view is the perspective from which the story is told. Together all of these pieces make up the whole of the story.*

## Cornell Notes and Tutorial Sessions

Students in AVID are taught to review their notes, keeping track of what they know and don't know. Once they have determined what they don't know, they can use their notes to create tutorial questions to be used in their tutorial groups. Students can thereby share with each other what they know about a subject and what they still need to know, through collaboration.

When teaching the Cornell note-taking system it is helpful to begin by teaching **Costa's Model of Intellectual Functioning in Three Levels**. **Level one** questions are text or lecture explicit, meaning there is one place within a text where a student can find the answer to the question, and these questions aid in comprehension and recall. **Level two** questions are text implicit and require students to look over the entire text and synthesize the material to come up with an answer to the question. **Level three** questions are experienced based and require students to think beyond what the text says and use their own prior knowledge and experiences, combined with the text, to come up with an answer to the question.

Once AVID students are familiar with Costa's method, they will be able to better construct thought-provoking questions for the left hand side of their notes. Then, after reviewing and summarizing their notes, students can determine what help they need from their tutorial groups. Students use existing questions from their Cornell notes and write level two or level three questions based on the confusing parts of their notes to ask their tutorial group members. Participants in tutorial groups will use level two and level three questions to lead their peers to find their own answers. The tutor uses the questions and Socratic method to facilitate tutorial and guide student learning. For more on Costa's method, see *Implementing and Managing the AVID Program, Middle Level*.

