

NOTE TAKING SKILLS

TWO-COLUMN NOTES

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Once students know how to recognize and formulate main ideas, they can learn to take notes that include important details. Encourage your child to take notes using the two-column method described below. This model is an adaptation of a note taking method developed at Cornell University for college students. (Palk, W. 1962. *How to Study in College*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin)

- Draw a line down a sheet of paper, with one-third of the page on the left, and two-thirds of the page on the right.
- Write the main idea of each paragraph on the left side.
- List details on the right side of the page.

The two-column note taking method visually separates information into main ideas and details. By placing the details to the right of the main ideas, students can easily see which details support which main ideas. In contrast, information noted in a linear format (such as outlining) appears as a stream of facts, with no visual way to distinguish main ideas from details.

The two-column note taking format also makes it easier for students to use notes to prepare for a test. For example, you can ask your child to cover the details on the right side of the page with a sheet of paper, look at the main ideas in the left column, and turn them into study questions. This challenges the student to recall the details to answer the question. If necessary, he can lift the cover to review. Similarly, your child can cover the main ideas and use the details to recall the major points.

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