

## Double-Entry Journals

### When to Use

Before Reading

During Reading

After Reading

### DESCRIPTION

Good old traditional notetaking worked well enough for many of us in college. But not all our students are as prepared to handle their reading as we were. So we can help them fill their notes with more real thinking as they read. In this strategy, also called the Cornell system, students take notes on their reading in two columns with a line drawn vertically down the middle of each page. In one column, they summarize important ideas from the text. In the other, they write their own thoughts and responses—questions, confusions, personal reactions, or reflections on what the information means.

### WHY USE IT?

Many students need to learn how to take effective notes when they read and to identify important concepts and facts they will need later, rather than view everything as equally significant. They also need opportunities to reflect on the topic, to wonder about its significance, or ask themselves what might be implied by the ideas presented. This is a more continuous, self-directed response tool, compared to sticky notes and bookmarks.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Read aloud through a short selection on the overhead (or photocopy for all to follow). Model for students how to distinguish between important and minor ideas in their reading, re-stating ideas in your own words in column one, thinking aloud about why you chose those items and then jotting down this thinking, along with other responses, in column two.
2. Give students a chance to practice this kind of thinking and note-making with another short piece of reading and share the results together.
3. For a specific assignment, have students do some double-entry notetaking as they read on their own, and again compare the results in class together—thus gradually turning more responsibility over to them.
4. If you require students to take these notes regularly, you'll probably want to check their notebooks periodically. Stagger the due dates for various classes so you aren't overloaded with paperwork. Skim over and check off the entries quickly and, if you have time, comment on just one or two for each student, perhaps with sticky notes of your own.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Descriptions of the double-entry notetaking approach are published by many colleges and universities. The original source: Walter Pauk. 1962. *How to Study in College*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.