

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

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The two-column note-taking method requires active reading, that is, processing must occur for the notes to be taken. Two-column notetaking is an especially useful method for detailed and technical information. The act of separating main ideas from details strengthens the understanding and memory of the content area. However, like just about any strategy for learning, students need to understand the point of the exercise. Thus, it is up to the classroom teacher to demonstrate the need for the two-column note method.

In order to create a successful environment for learning and using this method, allow us to make some suggestions for teachers to use in the classroom. First, teachers must set the tone. Start from the beginning of the school year and students will become adjusted to the expectations of this method. Next, teachers should model this method for their students. Organize your own notes in two-columns to provide a model for the correct way to complete this task. Class writing activities can be in two-column note form and notes on the board should be in two columns as well. Open note quizzes requiring well-organized notes can demonstrate why they are an invaluable reference. Providing many opportunities for your students to take two-column notes as well as to utilize them will eventually make the skill an automatic one.

There are a number of ways for students to use the set-up of two-column notes in and outside of the classroom. First, two-column notes can provide an excellent outline for use as a writing tool. The student can use the notes as an outline for a summary by turning main ideas into topic sentences and adding key details as supports. (It is important to note at this point the necessity of paraphrasing.) Also, the notes can later be used as a study sheet. For example, the students can fold their paper, turn the main ideas into questions, and then use the main ideas to recall the details as well as use the details to generate the main ideas. Finally, during the process of learning and using the two-column note method there can be many opportunities where students work together. For example, one student can locate the main ideas, while another can identify the details. Students can also work together to discuss why some details might be more important to document than others. Cooperative learning can be a useful way to teach just about any skill.



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Other things to keep in mind:

- Use one side of the paper
- Omit small, unnecessary words
- Keep the meaning clear
- Don't write full sentences (abbreviate)
- Not all paragraphs have new main ideas
- Not all paragraphs have new details
- Some paragraphs have implied main ideas and require more time to identify
- The more room you leave, the easier it is to edit
- Details should be recorded in same order as found in reading

Here is an example of two-column notes taken from the above reading.

Date: January 10, 2023

Subject: Study Skills

Topic: Classroom Uses for Two-Column Notes

Main Idea	Supporting Details
Two-Column Note-taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires active reading• Processing of information must occur• Strengthens understanding and memory• Teachers need to show students how/why it works
Suggestions for Classroom Use:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set the tone• Model for students• Class activities in two-column note form• Open note quizzes using two-column notes• Notes on board in two-columns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use as an outline for writing• Create a study guide with the notes• Engage in cooperative learning



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Blank Template

Main Idea	Supporting Details

