

Lecturer's Style

Learn your lecturer's style and pay attention to the instructor's cues that indicate structure in the lecture, the relationships among ideas, and the relative importance of ideas. These cues include transitional phrases and words, body language, voice tone and pace, repetition of ideas, and the time spent on certain subjects. Some lecturers speak slowly, some use outlines and overheads, some summarize their lectures, some repeat or highlight important points...and some don't. Some may increase or decrease the volume at which they are speaking, write something on the board or an overhead, or, they may even simply state "This will be on your exam". By listening for the cues your instructor gives, you will be able to identify crucial material.

Review

Review your notes regularly and cumulatively, looking for developing course themes, and relationships between the ideas of successive lectures to see the organization of the course content as it develops over the term. Looking for relationships can assist you in "seeing the big picture" which is important to your overall comprehension and recall of the course material. Your review of notes should bring together lecture notes with any notes you have taken from the course readings. Reviewing your notes will allow you to address any concerns you had with the material or add thoughts you had about the lecture while it is still fresh in your mind, and will make reviewing for your exam a much less onerous task.

Note-taking at University

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Making Lecture Notes at University

Tips to help you make the grade!



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Why is it Important to Take Notes?

Notes serve as the basis for continued study of your course concepts and provide a sort of paper-based memory for the lecture. Not only does the activity of making notes in lecture help to keep you involved in the class, but notes are a starting place for you to relate ideas within the course and to highlight any questions you may have. Notes become your source for review, critical thinking and exam preparation, and for creating arguments for essays.

Active Listening

Taking notes from lecture is a thinking activity. Effective listening involves avoiding premature judgment of the speaker, paying attention, and developing an interest for listening to the lecture. As a lecture proceeds, pay particular attention to the beginnings and endings of the lecture to gain a better sense of its outline and main points, then summarize and anticipate the direction of the lecture. Evaluate the ideas you hear, select important information to record, and ask questions about what you hear. Avoid the passive listener approach of trying to "get it all"; instead, listen for main ideas, key details, and transitional phrases which point to the structure and focus of the lecture.

Be Selective

It is your job to determine what is important. When taking notes in class, you will likely find it difficult to write down every detail. You do not need to take down all the information in lectures, or from a text, especially when they overlap. Focus on

information that reflects the main themes of the course, keywords from overheads or chalkboards, information that is repeated or is confusing, and details that build on course readings, and previous lectures. Prepare for the lecture by reviewing the course outline, by reviewing previous notes, or by reading the assigned chapter or articles. You may find it useful to use your course outline and readings as a guide.

Less is More

It is helpful to develop and employ abbreviations when making notes. Come up with short forms of frequently used long words (e.g., b/c for because) and use these short forms when recording information. Point form phrases, abbreviations and symbols should probably be used in place of full sentences in most situations. Obvious exceptions would be when there's a definition or information presented that you don't understand. Symbols (such as "" or "!" or "?") are useful for signifying importance, or can be used to point out areas which require further explanation. Using point-form or abbreviations can help you write less and listen more as you try to capture the essence of the lecture.

Note-taking Formats

Take notes so that the organization and relative importance of ideas are reflected in the notes. Maybe leave a little open space to add information later. Consider a format that promotes review and can be used to test your understanding of the material. Cornell notes and Mind Maps (mapping notes) are ideal for this purpose. For the Cornell style

notes, divide the page into two columns such that the left column is slightly larger than the margin and the other occupies the remainder of the page. Take point-form notes from class in the right hand column and fill in the left column with key concepts and ideas when reviewing your notes.

Cornell Notes

Quest-ions	Your regular lecture notes go here.
Key Terms	Leave space to fill in information at a Later date, or to add information from course.
Links to other notes	readings

To create mapping notes which are a more visual format, circle the main concept in the center of the page. Each topic branches off individually from this circle and then the ideas around this topic are listed there.

Mind Map - Bears

