How to listen to lectures and take good notes

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Session Outline

• Welcome and congratulations
• Lectures - what are they and why do we have them?
• Listening and Note Taking
  – Why?
  – How?
  – Preparing
  – Abbreviations, styles and other tips
• Practice
• Summary and final thoughts
What is a lecture?

• One of the main methods of teaching at university.
• Usually a large group of people (many even in the hundreds)
• Broadcast Delivery – one person talking to a group
• Different from Tutorials and Seminars which are smaller and where there is more discussion
What is a lecture?

• May have different aims and outcomes depending on your area but generally they:
  – provide a summary of essential knowledge in a subject area and stimulate your interest
  – guide your reading and research
  – demonstrate how to do something, e.g. solve a problem
  – present a point of view or different points of view and challenge your thinking
Types of lectures

• Many different types

  • Reading/stand and deliver - the lecturer stands at the front and talks, with or without PowerPoint slides or handouts.
  • Conversationalist - the lecturer talks naturally and invites questions in a structured way.
  • Rhetorical – the lecture has many digressions and lots of discussion during the session.

• Many styles of lecturing

• Preparation is usually necessary for all types of lectures and readings may be suggested.
Lectures

• It is important that you get the most out of the lectures you attend.

• Some lectures will be more interesting than others - identify how lecturers approach their subject.

• Listening is sometimes difficult – have to maintain concentration - you need to see your role as active rather than passive. Note taking can help in this process.
Why take notes?

• As well as helping you to listen more actively taking notes is also essential
  – To help you to remember what has been said as it is easy to forget after the lecture and personal notes are sometimes easier to remember than texts.
  – To provide you with a summary of relevant and important points on the topic being presented for revision and so that you can recognise relevant points for your own writing and study.
  – When you take notes you are already beginning to analyse the topic and think about what is important.
Note taking

• Even if you are given handouts you should still take notes.
• Remember you do not need to write down every word.
• Good notes help you to prepare for your written work, tutorials and your exams.
• The secret to good note taking is preparation and practice.
Common problems in lectures

• Inability to keep up with the lecturer
• Inability to tell what is important and what is not
• Inability to understand the lecture content
• Inability to make sense of the lecture notes later on.
• Preparation is vital
Preparation is vital

• Before the Lecture:
  • Look at the topic of the lecture and think about what you might already know or what you might already think about the topic.
  • Revise the previous lecture or tutorial
  • Do any pre-reading. If you are familiar with the topic, vocabulary and common terms then you have more chance of understanding and not losing time thinking and guessing about unfamiliar terms.
Be organised

• Arrive early
• Sit where you can hear and concentrate
• Make sure you are equipped with paper, pens, laptop etc.
• Be ready in time to hear the introduction which should give you an idea of what the content will be.
During the lecture

• Engage
  – Listen carefully to what the lecturer says.
  – Consider how the information fits into your topic.
  – Ask yourself what is the main point of this lecture? What do I want to learn about this topic?
During the lecture cont.

• Try to identify the main points
  • Sometimes these are given at the beginning
  • Sometimes you have to listen for cues
    • introduction, body and summary stages
    • signposts and linking expressions (next slide)
    • non verbal cues such as facial expressions and hand and body signals
    • visual cues including references to names, sources, events
    • phonological cues such as changes in voice volume, speed etc. Generally with more important information the speaker will speak slower, louder and more directly.
During the lecture cont.

• Listen for words that might direct you
  • Contrast words – however, but, despite, on the other hand, conversely
  • Concession words – although, even though, in the light of, given that
  • Addition words – also, too, in addition, furthermore
  • Emphasis words – importantly, specifically, especially, obviously
Signposts and linking expressions

- Listen for words that might direct you
  - Sequencing words – firstly, secondly, next, finally
  - Summary words – in conclusion, to sum up, in summary
  - Illustration words – for example, to illustrate, that is
  - Reason and result words – consequently, because, therefore
Your lecturers

• Get used to your lecturers style
• What do they provide?
  – Detailed notes
  – Outlines to add information to
  – Videoed or recorded so that you can listen again
• Do they use a lot of examples?
• Do they introduce at the beginning or summarise at the end?
Basic note taking tips

• Head your pages – topic, subject, lecturer, date
• Number your pages especially if loose leaf
• Leave a wide margin for making points later
• Space the notes out to leave room for later additions and comments
• Some people like written notes others are more visual and like to use diagrams e.g. mind maps
## Cornell note taking method

### After Lecture
- Cues
- Mark important parts
- Mark Prompts
- Put in Questions
- Put in Comments

### Record Lecture Notes Here

### Summary
After lecture write brief summary of page here
Mind/concept maps

• Presents the information in a visual form
• Can add information in any sequence
• But they can become cluttered so
  • allow room eg. both facing pages of an open A4 note or A3 size page to set out your
  • allow plenty of space for adding ideas
  • begin in the middle of the page and add ideas on branches from the centre or other branches
  • use arrows, symbols and words to show links between the Parts
  • use colour
LECTURES

Problems
- What's important
- Don't understand
- Notes confused
- Can't keep up

Style
- Notes
- Videos
- Example
- Outline

Tips
- Use mind maps
- Spaces
- Margins
- Date
- Pages
- Numbers
- Topic
- Name

Preparation / Organisation
- Arrive early
- Paper & pens
- Do readings
Mind map example
Note taking tips

• Every student will develop their own method of taking notes, but:
  • Make your notes brief. Don't write down everything that you hear. Be alert and attentive to the main points.
  • Try to take your notes in your own words with the exception of things like formulas, definitions, specific facts. When you do take down something exactly, note that you have e.g. use “..”.
  • Use outlines and numbering systems. Indenting can help you to distinguish main points from minor ones.
  • Use underlining, colours, upper case - what works for you to indicate important things.
Note taking tips cont.

• Don’t write incidental words such as ‘the’, ‘in’ etc.
• Be brief ‘Never use a sentence where you can use a phrase. Never use a phrase where you can use a word.’
• If you miss something don’t panic try to write the key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information later.
• Don't keep notes on odd bits of paper, use a note book or folder. If you use a computer save all the notes for one subject together. Keep notes in order and in one place.
• Devise a system of abbreviations and symbols, but be consistent in your use of them.
Symbols and abbreviations

• The use of symbols and abbreviations can be useful but you need to be familiar and consistent with the ones you use

• For example a lecture on body image
  • Body image anxiety now affects both males and females. Forty percent of males want to loose weight while forty five percent want to gain weight leading to possible steroid abuse
  • Body image anx. Affects M & F. 40% M want to loose weight, 45% want to gain → ?steroid abuse
Common symbols

Common Abbreviations

•  = equals/is equal to/is the same as
•  ≠ is not equal to/is not the same as
•  ≡ is equivalent to
•  ∴ therefore, thus, so, because
•  + and, more, plus
•  > more than, greater than
•  < less than
•  — less, minus
•  → gives, causes, leads to, results in,
•  rises, increases by
•  falls, decreases by
•  eg for example
•  et al all, everyone
•  NB note
•  C.f. compare
•  i.e. that is
•  no. number

•  % percent
•  Etc etcetera, and so on
•  C18 eighteenth century
•  gov government
•  nec necessary
•  diff different

Discipline-Specific

•  VF Ventricular Fibrillation
•  CSF cerebro spinal fluid
•  FBC Fluid Balance Chart
•  COAD Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease
•  #NOF Fractured neck of femur
•  4/24 four hourly
•  1/7 daily
•  BD twice daily
•  Etc.
After the lecture

- Revise your lecture notes as soon as possible after the lecture, this will help you to remember and to highlight anything you need to know.
- Tidy up your notes by filling in any missing bits and highlighting any questions that you might think of and need to ask.
- You might like to write a short summary of the lecture at the end with the main points and your thoughts.
- Attach any handouts to your lecture notes.
- File safely.
What if I don’t understand?

• The most important thing is to write down your question so that you don't forget it. Then:
  – Ask a question during the lecture if allowed.
  – Ask the lecturer at the end of the lecture.
  – Ask in the related tutorial.
  – Send the lecturer an email.
  – Look on FLO and join in a discussion.
  – Ask your classmates later.
  – Check your readings.

• OK Let’s practice with a mini lecture!
Twins – lecture outline

• Types of Twins
• How are the types different?
• Incidence in Australia
Practice

• What was the mini lecture about?
• Look at your notes – what are they like?
• What did you think was important?
• How did you know what was important?
Notes

Twins
• 2 Types
  – 2% of all naturally conc. Preg = twins? because women get preg later in life
  – Identical from 1 fertilized egg
    • Always same sex
    • “blood type
    • “genes
  – Fraternal from 2 eggs & 2 sperm fert. at same time
    • Genet. Not same
    • Not nec. Same blood or sex
Summary

– Write the topic name, subject, lecturer and date at the top of the page.
– Leave a wide margin and space between points so you can add material later.
– Don't panic! You don’t need to write down every word the lecturer says.
– Use abbreviations when you can. e.g. Write 'eg' rather than 'for example'.
– Write short phrases rather than whole sentences.
– Use arrows and lines to show connections between points.
– Make an 'action column', with important points, main arguments, references and questions.
Final thoughts

• Not all lecturers are easy to follow.
• The best note-takers focus on main ideas rather than trying to write down all the facts. They also prepare and ask themselves questions about the material.
• Practice and work out what works best for you.
• Good luck and remember us at the SLC.
Student Learning Centre

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- **Writing Centre (Main Library)**
  - Drop-in Sessions
  - 15 minutes duration
    - Monday - Thursday 10.00 - 4.00
    - Fridays 10.00 - 12.00
- **Maths Centre (Basement of Union Building)**
  - Drop-in Sessions
  - 15 minutes duration
    - Mondays and Tuesdays 10.00 - 4.00
- **Study, maths and writing guides**

- **Where are we**
  - Level 1 Student Services

- **On the web @**

- **Contact us**
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