

A System for Effective Listening and Note Taking

You can think about 4 TIMES FASTER than a lecturer can speak. Effective LISTENING requires the expenditure of energy: to compensate for the rate of presentation, you have to actively intend to listen. NOTETAKING is one way to enhance listening, and using a systematic approach to the taking and reviewing of your notes can add immeasurably to your understanding and remembering the content of lectures.

BEFORE CLASS

- Develop a mind-set geared toward listening.
- Test yourself over the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
- Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new technical terms, etc.
- Do what you can to improve physical and mental alertness (fatigue, hunger, time of day, where you sit in the classroom all affect motivation).
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note taking: a separate notebook with full-sized pages is recommended for each course.
- INTEND TO LISTEN.

DURING CLASS

- Listen for the structure and information in the lecture.
- Resist distractions, emotional reactions or boredom.
- Be consistent in your use of form, abbreviations, etc.
- Pay attention to the speaker for verbal, postural, and visual clues to what's important.
- Label important points and organizational clues: main points, examples.
- When possible translate the lecture into your own words, but if you can't, don't let it worry you into inattention!
- If you feel you don't take enough notes, divide your page into 5 sections and try to fill each part every 10 minutes (or work out your own formula).
- Ask questions if you don't understand.
- Instead of closing your notebook early and getting ready to leave, listen carefully to information given toward the end of class; summary statements maybe of particular value in highlighting main points; there may be possible quiz questions, etc.

AFTER CLASS

- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking either the teacher or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Edit your notes, labeling main points, adding recall clues and questions to be answered. ➤ Key points in the notes can be highlighted with different colors of ink.
- Make note of your ideas and reflections, keeping them separate from those of the speaker.

PERIODICALLY

- Review your notes: glance at your recall clues and see how much you can remember before rereading the notes.
- Look for the emergence of themes, main concepts, methods of presentation over the course of several lectures.
- Make up and answer possible test questions.