

# Lecture Note Taking

## Before Class

- Read or survey the material that will be covered in the upcoming lecture.
- Read over your notes from the previous class.
- Look at the course outline to see where you've been, where you're going, and how it all fits together.
- Meet with your instructor/TA to clarify concepts from the last lecture.
- Get the notes from any class session you've missed.

## During Class

- Date and title each set of notes.
- Keep notes from different classes separate.
- Sit where you can hear and see clearly without distractions.
- Don't crowd your notes! Leave blanks to fill in missed items and to expand your notes later on.
- Ask your instructor, TA, or classmate to help you fill in the gaps if you think you missed important points.
- Stay involved in the class and ask questions. Volunteer for demonstrations. Join in class discussions.
- Take too many notes, rather than not enough. You can always omit unnecessary information later.
- Think to yourself, "Why is this important?"
- Focus on what point the professor is on, rather than scrambling to write down the whole overhead without listening to what the professor is saying.
- Write down notes in your own words when possible and think about what the professor is saying. However, definitions of technical terms should be recorded exactly as given.
- Use abbreviations and symbols to save time. Make sure you understand your abbreviations!  $\theta$  Take notes in different colors to highlight important points.
- Use underlining or symbols, such as an asterisk or star, to identify points your instructor emphasizes.
- Keep alert for and highlight points your instructor emphasizes by means of verbal cues. Watch for lists such as "the following 5 steps" or "the 4 major causes" and for summaries signaled by words such as "consequently" or "therefore."
- Add examples your professor provides to clarify abstract ideas and to jog your memory when studying.
- Make eye contact with the lecturer.
- Don't be a clock-watcher. Instructors do not always pace themselves accurately and may cram half of the lecture into the last 15 minutes.

- Learn as much as you can in class because this will better help you understand and complete outside assignments. For example, if your instructor pauses during lecture, use that time to review the notes you've taken so far.
- Meet a conscientious and success-oriented student in each class at the beginning of every semester and share notes

## **After Class**

- Review notes within 24 hours of class, or else you will be relearning.
- Should you recopy your notes? Some people benefit from rewriting or recopying their lecture notes. However, be sure to leave time to think about your notes. Experiment and find out what works best for you.
- Use margin space to fill in abbreviations, add omitted points, correct errors, and write key words. Read notes to be sure you can clarify confusing or illegible material.
- As you read your notes, underline, highlight, or mark main points or important points you will want to give special attention to when you study the material again for the exam.
- Elaborate your notes. Compare the information to what you already know. Write additional information from the text into notes.
- Connect concepts to see their meaning in the larger picture. Think of a summary in your head or write it at the end of your notes (see the Cornell Method).
- Practice reciting the information using only key words.
- Talk with other students about the lecture.
- Conduct short weekly review periods. Once a week, go through all your notes again. Put reviews on your calendar and make it a habit.

## **Effective Listening**

- Sit near the front of the room.
- Find a reason to listen to the speaker. Why is this important?
- Listen for more than just facts. Try to understand the big picture.
- Recite key ideas to yourself.
- Pay attention.
- Avoid outside distractions and internal noise.
- Anticipate what the speaker is going to say next.
- Try to select main ideas and supporting details (mentally organize).
- Prepare for lectures beforehand.
- Listen first, then write. Leave spaces to fill in gaps in your information.
- Formulate questions to look up later, or ask the instructor.
- Put aside personal bias and listen to the content of the speaker's message.

## **Write it Down if the Speaker...**

- Repeats an item.
- Writes an item on the board or overhead.
- Points or gestures.
- Changes tone or volume of voice.
- Makes a direct reference to the book.
- Asks if everyone understands.
- Gives an example.
- Slows down.

## The 5 Rs

1. **Record:** During the lecture, write all meaningful information legibly.
2. **Reduce:** After the lecture, write a summary of the ideas and facts using key words as cue words. Summarizing as you study helps to: a) Clarify meanings and relationships of ideas. b) Reinforce continuity. c) Strengthen memory retention. d) Prepare for exams in advance.
3. **Recite:** To study properly, you must recite all the information in your own words without looking at your notes or the text.
4. **Reflect:** Think about your own opinions and ideas as you read over your notes. Raise questions, then try to answer them creatively. Record original ideas in your notebook and review them regularly. Use your creative ideas when answering exam questions, in classroom discussions, and when writing papers.
5. **Review:** Before reading or studying new material, take ten minutes to quickly review your older notes. Skim over the main ideas and details. Review enhances more effective retention of old material when adding new material to your memory system.

*Source: Pauk, W. (1989). How to Study in College (4th Ed.), Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin*

## Daydreaming

Be in class in body and mind.

Notice your writing. When you discover yourself slipping into a fantasyland, notice how your pen feels in your hand. Notice how your notes look. Paying attention to the act of writing can bring you back to the here and now.

Write your thoughts down. If you are distracted by errands you have to run or other things you have to do, write them on a 3X5 card and put it in your pocket. Mark your notes so you know where your mind started to wander.

Be with the instructor. In your mind, put yourself right up front with the instructor. Imagine that you and the instructor are the only ones in the room and the lecture is a personal talk with you. Pay attention to the instructor's body language and facial expressions. Look the instructor in the eye.

Notice your environment. When your mind starts to wander, bring yourself back to class by paying attention to the temperature in the room, the feel of your chair, or the quality of the light in the room. Run your hand along the surface of your desk. Listen to the fan running or the sound of the teacher's voice. Be in that environment.

*Source: Ellis, David B. (1994). Becoming a Master Student: Tools, Techniques, Hints, Ideas, Illustrations, Examples, Methods, Procedures, Processes, Skills, Resources, and Suggestions for Success. Rapid City, SD: College Survival, 378pp*