

## MAKING NOTES IN LECTURES

### *Other Handouts:*

- Time Management
- Improve Your Reading of Academic Texts
- Mind Mapping

### Step 1: Prepare for the lecture

- Review the learning objectives set out in your study guide for that week.  
*What are you expected to understand after this week's lectures and tutorials?*
- Preview the key reading/s

#### **Tip!**

*Make a note of key words and concepts from the readings and see if these are expanded and clarified during the lecture.*

- Organise your folders so that you have all the notes for each unit in a separate folder or file; or have one file with clearly separated sections for each unit.

#### **Tip!**

*Make a note of the date, topic and lecturer's name at the start of your notes. This will help with your revision for exams*

### Step 2: During the lecture

- Write your lecture notes on one side of a page from your note-book and draw a vertical line down the page to create two columns with the left column wider than the right. In the wide column, write your notes in paragraph form.
- Write something down even if you don't know what the lecturer just said. It will become clearer later! Remember, learning takes time, and it is all right to be confused. Complex material is not necessarily meant to be immediately transparent at first-year level.
- Listen for words and phrases that signal key points, relationships between ideas/facts and transitions within an argument during the lecture.

For example<sup>1</sup>

**Addition:** In addition, again, also, and, besides, finally, first, further, last, moreover, second, too, next

**Cause and effect:** Accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, otherwise, therefore, thus

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, L. & Rowland, F. 2006, *A Guide to Learning Independently*, Pearson Longman, NSW, p. 217.

**Comparison:** Similarly, likewise

**Contrast:** In contrast, although, and yet, but, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary

**Examples or special features:** For example, for instance, in other words, in illustration, in this case, in particular, specifically

**Summary:** In brief, in conclusion, in short, on the whole, to conclude, to summarise, to sum up

- Use abbreviations to improve your speed of taking notes.

Common Abbreviations:

e.g.	for example	etc	and so on
i.e.	that is	b/n	between
∴	therefore	↑	increase(ing)
w/o	without	↓	decrease(ing)

- Pay close attention to the structure of the lecture and all the cues - verbal, non-verbal and visual - given by the lecturer.

Many lecturers provide an overview of their lecture in the introduction and explicitly introduce their theme or argument and the main points to come. They may also provide a concise summary of the main points of the lecture in their conclusion. Note this down.

***Tip!***

*Always be there for the beginning and the end of lectures!*

- Recognise that most people can only concentrate for 15 minutes at a time.

**Focusing during a lecture**

When your attention wanders, bring your mind back into focus by writing a question or comment about the material being presented in the lecture. If you miss a large section or find it difficult to follow the lecture, write a note to yourself as to what you are going to do later to find this information.

For example:

- Will you go through the PowerPoint slides on WebCT?
- Will you spend more time reading the study guide?
- Will you think about the set questions for this week's tutorial?
- When will you do these tasks?

***Tip!***

*Write a note to yourself to schedule these tasks into your diary.*

Making these notes during the lecture can sometimes help you to re-engage the listening process.

### Step 3: After the lecture

- Review your notes and summarise key points and write in the narrow column. This will force you to analyse and identify the exact information that is essential from this lecture.

**Tip!**

*File these notes by week or theme in the folder you are compiling for each unit. At the end of semester you can lay out all the single-sided sheets showing the narrow columns only and you will have a summary of the semester's lectures. This is very useful for your revision for exams.*

- Draw a mind-map to set out the key points of the lecture, supporting evidence and examples used to illustrate this evidence.
- Follow up on research or reading that was mentioned in the lecture
- Write three sentences on how you think the material presented in this lecture links to the previous lecture

### Step 4: Reciprocal questioning<sup>2</sup>

Talk to other students about the content of the lecture and discuss the ideas.

**Tip!**

*Form groups with your fellow students for a more effective way of learning from lectures.*

Ask each other questions about the material and ideas covered in the lecture, for example:

- How would you use ..... to .....?
- What is a new example of .....?
- Explain why .....?
- What do you think would happen if .....?
- What is the difference between ..... and .....?
- How are ... and ... similar...?
- What is a possible solution to the problem of .....?
- What conclusions can you draw about.....?
- How does ..... affect .....?
- In your opinion, which is best, ..... or.....? Why?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of.....?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement.....?
- Support your answer using evidence from your reading.
- How is ..... related to ..... that we studied earlier?

**Tip!**

*This is another useful technique for revision for your exams.*

<sup>2</sup> Hogan, C. 1999, *Facilitating learning: Practical strategies for college and university*, Eruditions Publishing, Emerald, Victoria, p. 106.