

Note-taking at University

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1. Introduction: The Purpose of Note-taking at University

For many students just entering university, the prospect of attending first year university classes among literally hundreds of students in large lecture theatres can be very intimidating. Being accustomed to smaller classrooms and discussion groups in high school, students coming to university for the first time often have to develop new skills of listening, note-taking, and using notes as part of the process of learning through lectures. And while some instructors can be very effective in making a large lecture hall an interactive learning opportunity for students, it is more and more the case that students at university face larger and larger classes where their role is to listen and take notes.

Simply put, the purpose of note-taking in lectures and tutorials is to record your understanding of the ideas and concepts discussed in class for future uses such as essay writing, preparing to read, and studying for examinations and tests. In practice, achieving this purpose can be a real challenge. You may often find yourself unable to keep up with the professor or trying to copy down every single word uttered by the instructor. You may also find that you are becoming frustrated that you aren't getting everything or that you are not understanding the material you do copy down. Maybe you don't know what to do about it.

Developing the skills necessary to learn effectively from lectures and overcome these initial frustrations is the focus of this handout. We will discuss what it means to be an active listener, to listen with a purpose, to learn the instructor's presentation style, to use the verbal and visual cues of a lecture to grasp a lecture's focus. We will explore how to use a variety of note-taking formats, including the Cornell style of notes and Mind Maps. Finally, we will examine how to use the notes you make in lectures to further the learning you are doing for your classes.

2. Learning to Listen to University Lectures

When we talk about learning to listen, we are talking about learning to engage in an activity that takes skills and effort. Just because we can hear doesn't mean that we can listen effectively. (And for that matter, just because we may not be able to hear, doesn't mean that we can't listen effectively.) Listening is a thinking activity. If we are hearing without thinking, it may be the case that we are not listening well. And you may know from personal experience, it isn't always easy to listen. Perhaps the lecturer is speaking too softly. Maybe the way the lecturer speaks makes it hard to understand what is being discussed. It might be that the lecturer has said something you have taken offense to and so it is hard to concentrate on the rest of the message. Lecturers sometimes speak too slowly or too quickly or end up talking on tangents that may or may not have anything to do with the theme of a lecture. Some students even complain that the lecturer just reads out what is in the book. As you will see, there are many potential obstacles to listening effectively, some to do with you as a listener and some to do with the professor as lecturer. If you want to benefit from the lecture, however, it is often up to you to take

responsibility for improving the situation. One very powerful way is to learn to listen more effectively.

Active listening and selectivity.

As I mentioned briefly above, listening is a thinking activity and as such can be improved with instruction and practice. It isn't enough to say that you ought to be thinking as you are in lectures (because it may be that you are thinking, but not about the lecture!). It is very helpful to define what activities you are actually mentally engaging in when you listen actively. Some of these activities include understanding, summarizing, analyzing, anticipating what will come next, mentally reviewing what has gone before, comparing what is said to what you found in the text, applying what you hear to your own personal experience, evaluating the information, selecting out what is most central, figuring out what can be ignored, interpreting the tangents the professor may venture on, reserving judgement when something controversial is said, posing questions, checking for accuracy, and shifting your attention between the lecturer and your notes. Clearly there is a lot going on when we listen actively. If your goal is to improve your listening, you don't have to do everything in this list all of the time. A very practical way of improving is to focus on one or two of these mental activities and practice them every lecture until they get to be second nature.

Now, these activities take practice to master. They will take time and effort to do and for a while you may feel like the quality of your note-taking is going down. But hang in there. Active listening is very important to your process of learning and can relieve the boredom and frustration that comes with thinking that everything is equally important and hoping that what is said in lecture will just sink in. Some ideas will "sink in" but this is not because of the idea so much as what you are doing with the idea. If something stayed in your mind after lecture, it is because at some level and in some way, you thought about it. The more you think about what you hear, the more likely it is that you will understand and remember the ideas of your lectures. And this is the point right? That is, the purpose of attending lectures is to understand and record this understanding for future use in essay writing, thinking, and preparing for exams. If you are attending lectures and not thinking, you are basically wasting your time by postponing the learning of your course until a later date. (And you probably know what it is like to try to learn the whole course in a few days of cramming with notes that you took mindlessly in class! It's really tough.)

As you embark on an exploration of how to engage your mind in active listening, focus on what you are thinking, try to learn your lecturer's teaching style, and focus on some common characteristics of lectures. We'll discuss these in more detail below.

Lecturer Characteristics

The following checklist may help you define your lecturer's style:

- Some lecturers talk quickly, some slowly.
- Some give an outline at the beginning of a lecture, or review what was talked about the week before.
- Others tie up all the loose ends at the end of a lecture and provide you with a hint or two about what the focus of the next lecture is going to be.
- Some have titles for their lectures, which indicates a clear focus and main idea, whereas others may just arrive and begin talking, forcing you to listen carefully for the main ideas.
- Some professors use humour; others tell stories; some seem dry, boring, and uninteresting.
- Some have a good way of repeating information that they find important, some use lots of examples, some rephrase what is said into different words to give you time to capture the idea.

Whatever characteristics your lecturer has, it is a good idea for you to become acquainted with them. Knowing how your lecturer operates will give you a sensitivity to the cues -- both verbal and non-verbal -- that will indicate what's important.

Features of the Lecture

Learning some features of lectures that are common to many listening settings at university can help you understand your lecturer's style. Paying attention to these features can assist you in identifying the division of topics in the lecture. These features may also assist you in deciding on the main ideas of the lecture. These features or structural parts include:

- introductions and conclusions
- repetition
- linking expressions
- rephrasing of ideas
- elaboration

Introductions and Conclusions The first few minutes of any lecture are very important, especially when the lecturer's style is to present a formal introduction or summary of the previous lecture before launching into the day's discussion. Sadly, some students rarely organize themselves to attend the class in time to take advantage of this important feature of the lecture. Without the guidance that the first few moments of a lecture can give, you may find yourself confused and lost as you try to categorize the information being covered. And, the beginning of the lecture is often a time when speakers offer their class announcements regarding tests, changes in times and dates for evaluations to be due, or class cancellations.

Likewise, the conclusion of the lecture serves to wrap up the ideas of a lecture, lend a sense of closure to the discussion, and highlight connections the lecture may have to the course readings and future lectures. Because of the realities of time management, professors often discover that they have more to say than time to convey it in and so the latter parts of a lecture may be characteristically more rushed, more densely packed with ideas, and explicit about the connections between ideas presented. Here too, you may find it difficult to listen effectively while your classmates are noisily packing up their books and knapsacks to make it to the next class. You may also be distracted by your own thoughts about what you have to do after class. These two features of the lecture format are often very important and often overlooked; make it a priority to hear and listen to them.

Repetition The task of listening to a lecture is beset with one subtle, but immovable, obstacle and that is that, for the most part, speakers in lectures speak more quickly than note-takers write their notes. And lecturers know this. As a result, lecturers will often repeat the central ideas, rephrase them, or elaborate them over an extended period of time, for the purposes of emphasizing them for their students. Others will offer a series of examples (rather than just state the idea or give one example) to achieve the purpose of repetition. Repetition is your defense against the difference between your speaker's rate and your writing speed; speakers comfortable talk at 200+ words per minute, while your writing of notes is likely to proceed at between 30 and 40 words per minute. Repetition gives you what you need most -- time -- to capture the important idea that is being emphasized. For you to take advantage of repetition, though, you have to be able to recognize its various forms as I have laid out above. It is really quite simple. You just have to prompt yourself to listen for the ways in which repetition is occurring. Sometimes you'll hear a word for word repetition (often with the professor slowing down to make it clear). Other times, you'll have to be paying attention to the meaning of the ideas so that you can determine that idea *x* is the same idea as idea *y*, just said with different words. As well, you can learn to listen for transitional phrases that indicate what is about to be said. The phrase *for example*, for example, indicates a special relationship between an idea that has just been stated and what's coming next. In its way the phrase *for example* represents a repetition of the idea.

Transitional Phrases or Linking Expressions Many students get caught up on the notion that they need to take down every single word in a lecture. A reason to do so might be to make sure they have everything noted that could possibly appear on an exam. Given the presence of repetition in lectures, you might begin to see how this is not necessary. Another feature of lectures that you can attend to are transitional phrases or linking expressions. Their purpose is to help you logically organize the relationships between the ideas expressed during your lecture. And there are lots of them. The fact that they exist to organize ideas means that in a way they aren't the ideas themselves -- another argument that you don't need every single word to get every single idea. Nonetheless, linking expressions are very valuable in assisting you in two of your chief jobs as a listener -- being organized and selecting the central material. In his book, *How to Study in College*, Walter Pauk lists out the most common linking expressions, including words which indicate contrast or change; additional material or repetition;

emphasis; number, lists and order; summary; concession; amplification; and cause and effect. Some examples follow:

contrast words: conversely, however, but, despite, on the other hand

repetition words: also, too, in addition, even more, to repeat, in other words

emphasis words: specifically, most importantly, especially

number, list and order words: then, secondly, finally, ultimately

summary words: in brief, in conclusion, to wrap up, for these reasons

concession words: given that, in light of, of course, even though

amplification words: for example, in other words, that is, i.e.,

cause and effect words: accordingly, because, consequently, therefore, if...then

Rephrasing of Ideas Speakers often slow the rate of their speech to allow students an opportunity to catch up during lectures. Another, somewhat more subtle, way of allowing students a chance to both understand more clearly and record more completely is rephrasing. Changing the way something is said is, essentially, repetition. To make use of it effectively, though, you need to be listening. And most professors have a style of speaking that involves some use of rephrasing that you can learn to anticipate. That is, some professors always, for example, repeat or rephrase a definition of new terminology. Think of the time professors use for rephrasing as time to clarify the idea or to finish writing down the thought you have.

Elaboration is another feature of the lecture that you will notice. Some times you might feel as if your professor just blabs on and on about the topic. Some students have even said things like, “Why can’t he just say what he means?” Well, in fact, the professor is saying just what he means. In addition to the basic main idea, the professor is often including detailed information about support for the idea, an argument for or against the concept, the history of the idea in your subject, its implications for your understanding of issues in your course -- any number of things. The purpose of this elaboration is to offer you enough information to be able to think for yourself about the ideas of importance to your course. To deal effectively with elaboration, it is important to listen for the main idea(s) and to then determine what kind of information is being given to elaborate on the topic.

3. Note-taking Formats

In addition to learning how to listen effectively to a lecture, it will be important for you to develop the ways in which you record your information. Many ineffectively organized notes resemble a simple “shopping list” of points with no apparent relationships between the ideas noted and this usually reflects a note-taker’s lack of understanding of these relationships. The effective listening skills outlined above will assist you in comprehending the lecture. In this section we will consider two common formats for structuring notes, the Cornell Note-taking System and Mind-Maps.

a. The Cornell Note-taking System

Throughout the popular student manuals on study skills (Walter Pauk’s *How to Study in College* and David Ellis’ *Becoming a Master Student*, for example) , the Cornell Note-taking System is commonly suggested for students who want to improve the organization of their notes. One of the keys to the system is that Cornell notes make use of your existing strengths as a note-taker so that learning the system requires a minimum of preparation and adjustment. Additionally, it permits you to develop study notes very soon after taking original lecture or text book notes without the added work of re-writing vast amounts of material.

Below is an example page of Cornell style notes. You’ll notice a couple of important features of the notes. First, the page has been divided into two vertical columns prior to the note-taking session; one is a third of the page wide (the key word or review column), the other two thirds (the notes column). You’ll notice that the notes you would regularly take are written down in the wider of the two columns and that headings are underlined, main ideas are indented slightly under the headings, and details which elaborate on the main ideas are indented further under the main ideas -- good suggestions for structuring your notes even if you don’t use the Cornell style.

Secondly, you’ll notice that the review column has been filled with key words and phrases and with questions. The idea is that you complete the narrower column after the note-taking session. The words and phrases you place here are meant to represent your selection of the key points of a lecture or reading. The questions you enter serve to help you clarify unclear ideas and to elaborate on the notes by connecting ideas together. You can connect ideas from the same lecture or you can connect ideas from one lecture to ideas in the rest of the course. The contents of the key word column are your study notes and can be used to practice your recall of the material. To review your notes, simply cover up the notes column of the page and use the keys in the key word column to trigger your memory. If you have difficulty recalling the information successfully at first, and need a tip, simply look over at the detailed information in the notes column.

The notes shown below are idealized; that is, they are meant to show common features of well organized notes. As a result, you may find that your notes differ considerably from these notes. The reasons for this are clear -- your notes are taken in real lecture situations or from texts under the time pressures of the term. It isn’t necessary for your notes to be

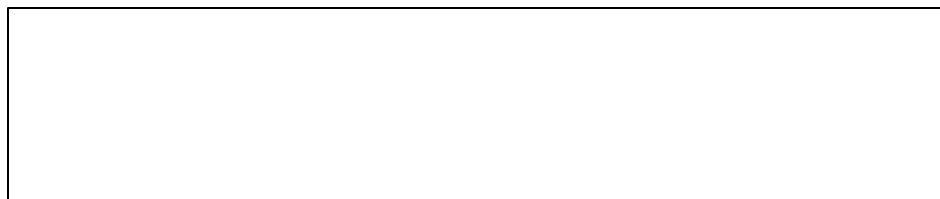
perfect -- they only need to be useful in identifying and recording main ideas and important details for later use in writing, thinking, and preparing for exams.

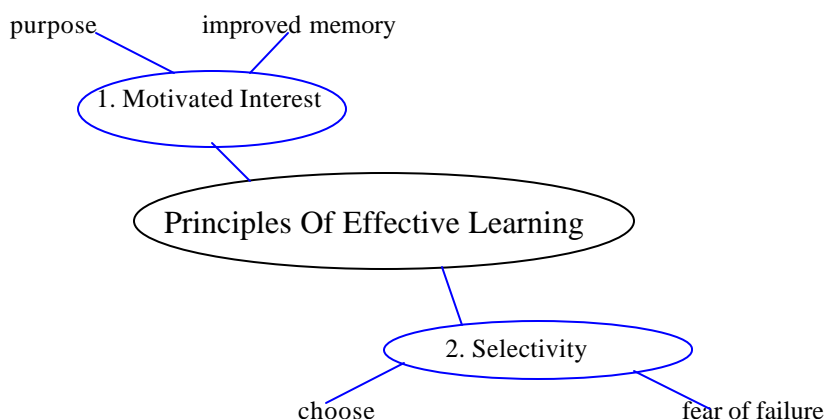
	January 7, '96
	Principles of Effective Learning
Motivated Interest -purpose for learning -improved memory -personal example?	<u>1. Motivated Interest</u> -important to have purpose for learning and a real interest in subject -interest leads to better attention and possibility for improved memory e.g., remembering the phone # of a prospective employer vs. recalling uninteresting statistics on the batting averages of world series baseball players from 1957
Selectivity -choose -taking too much rel. to a "fear of failure"	<u>2. Selectivity</u> -important to choose information relevant to your purpose as a learner -most students try to take in too much, irrelevant, information -not selecting related to a "fear of failure"

Perhaps the most important aspect of these notes is that they link the activity of note-taking to preparing for exams in a direct and practical way that can save you time. It may be the case that you have reasonably good notes already but want to take advantage of the features of Cornell notes without having to rewrite them. To convert existing notes, simply staple together notes from one chapter or lecture and add a blank cover page or two. Key words and phrases and questions can be listed on the blank cover pages and the notes can be used to review actively as we've described here.

b. Mind Maps

In addition to the Cornell Note-taking Style, you may wish to use a non-linear way of organizing your notes called Mind Maps (see Tony Buzan's *Use Your Head*). Mind Maps are diagrammatic ways of organizing key ideas from lectures and texts which emphasize the interconnection of concepts and illustrate the relative hierarchy of ideas from titles, to main concepts, to supporting details. Because they are diagrammatic, they have the potential to capture a lot of information on a single page. They help to show the conceptual links between ideas and allows for additional material to be added without the need to crowd the page. And, because they typically feature key words and phrases, they allow for the same kind of review that is facilitated by the Cornell notes. The Mind Map below has been constructed from the review column of the Cornell notes shown above.





In this Mind Map the central topic has been placed in the centre of the page and the main ideas related to it are placed on branches that directly connect to the central topic. The details which support these main ideas are then directly linked to the main ideas (and thereby, indirectly to the central topic). There is room to add information on further main ideas and you can add colour or doodles to accent your work. Each time you work with the mind map, you will make use of the key words and phrases that you developed in the review column of the Cornell notes and as a result you will interpret these keys each time you work with the Mind Map; essentially, you will be reviewing your material in a brief and active way.

Some students find that it is difficult to record a lecture using Mind Maps because they are unsure of the structure of the lecture in advance. If you feel the same way, you might try using Mind Maps to collect up the key information from a group of notes that you have already taken to get a sense of the overall themes of a section of your course. Or, you can use Mind Maps to capture and organize ideas you have about writing a paper as they occur to you randomly. The key to remember here is that Mind Maps allow for a great deal of information to be summarized in one place in a way that emphasizes the interrelationships among ideas.

4. Review Strategies

You may recall that the purpose for taking notes is to prepare a permanent record for later use in writing, thinking, and preparing for exams. It is with this latter purpose in mind that we now turn our attention to review strategies that in some way make use of the notes you have made from class or your texts. You have already begun to practice review strategies if you decided to use the Cornell Note-taking System or Mind Maps since they involve selecting key information, associating it with key words or phrases, and then elaborating on its meaning. The strategies listed below work in similarly active ways to

assist you with learning your material thoroughly. Keep in mind that these strategies are thinking intensive and that at first they will take some time to work with. You might begin to feel a little frustrated at the “extra” time these strategies seem to take. Try to hang in there and work with the strategies a while so that they become a little more automatic. What you will likely find is that you become more proficient at these reviewing skills and that you end up saving time that previously might have been spent simply reading and rereading your notes.

a. constructing an outline

Perhaps the greatest difficulty you can face with your notes is to find that up to three quarters of the information you have written is not necessary. The process of note-taking is often at least partly concerned with actually comprehending the information. As a result, you may tend to take down details that assist you with understanding the main ideas, only to find later that the key word or phrase representing the main idea alone serves the purpose. A common practical approach to lengthy notes undertaken by students is to rewrite the notes into “study notes”, notes typically composed of briefly written statements which captured only the main ideas necessary to recall your course information. And usually these notes were helpful in bringing together a whole term’s work, especially because as you made them, you consolidated your information.

Constructing an outline is not all that different from making those good old study notes. If you have been using the Cornell notes system, then you already have the raw materials for building an outline. Simply collect up all the key words and phrases and then structure them in a formal outline. A formal outline contains headings, sub-headings, detail points, examples, and so on arranged on a page with varying degrees of indentation to illustrate the relative position of the idea in the overall hierarchy of ideas in your course.

The outline below should give you a brief idea of what I mean. You’ll see that the outline resembles a kind of table of contents like the ones you might commonly come across in your texts. And, the idea is the same -- you construct an outline when you have a lot of information to organize and when you want to see that information as an overview.

Principles of Effective Learning	
A. Motivated Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) defining a purpose for learning (2) how memory is improved by motivated interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) attention (ii) concentration
B. Selectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) not selecting comes from a fear of failure (2) importance of choosing central information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) syllabus (ii) course lectures and texts (iii) collaborating with fellow students
C. Intention to Remember	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) must set purpose to remember <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) intending to remember vs. the “osmosis” model (ii) responsibility for using effective strategies (2) forgetting is effortless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Ebbinghaus forgetting curve
D. Meaningful Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) often students fail to organize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) notes resemble lists of unrelated facts (2) memory is facilitated by organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) organization is related to comprehension (ii) comprehension is related to improved memory

b. writing a summary paragraph

Another very helpful review strategy that you can engage in is to write a summary paragraph based on your notes. Ideally, you would write a summary paragraph from memory using the key words and phrases you chose from your notes. Try to do this in such a way as defines the terms and relates them together and to the rest of the course material. Also, consider how they might be applied in either a “real world” context or in your discipline. Summary paragraphs work well as practice for short answer and essay style exams and can go a long way to getting you started writing towards an essay or report.

c. making personal examples

Lecturers will often give a series of examples and illustrations for the main ideas they wish to emphasize. These examples will often take the form of experiments that support a hypothesis or theory or an anecdote that reveals how the idea is applied or manifests itself in real life. For the most part learning these examples will be helpful to you in your course -- you may even find a similar example used in a question on an exam or assignment. Sometimes, however, you may find that the example doesn't do a good job of explaining an idea for you or that an important idea from your course was not elaborated with an example. You are well advised, in such situations, to develop a personal example -- one that represents the ideas accurately but that also makes use of details that are familiar to you from your own context. You'll notice, if you look at the review column of the Cornell notes above that one of the entries is a question asking you for a personal example for motivated interest to replace the example about baseball. Incidentally, making a personal example is a good lie detector test for your ability to understand the course material: if you can make an effective example, it is a sign that you likely understand your material well.

d. elaborative rehearsal

Elaborative rehearsal is simply a fancy way of linking related ideas together in such a way that when you think of one idea, the others come logically to mind. When you talk out or write out information to define or analyze a key word or phrase, you are engaging in elaborative rehearsal. In fact, writing summaries, choosing personal examples, and generating questions (see below) are all forms of elaborative rehearsal. The process involves you going over your material through a variety of modes of repetition (that's the rehearsal part) and defining terms, comparing and contrasting ideas, looking for relationships between ideas in your notes and themes in your course etc. (that's the elaborative part). The purpose and goal of elaborative rehearsal is to allow you practice recalling and communicating fluently (either through written or oral language) the ideas of your course. Whereas passive studying mostly involves reading and rereading material in an attempt to store it in memory, elaborative rehearsal practices the actual process you engage in during an exam -- that is, remembering.

e. generating questions

What do you mean generate questions? See? You've got the hang of it already. This review strategy works well with the strategies listed above because it gets you to think about your material from another perspective -- the perspective of your instructor, to be exact. Again, when you go into a test situation, you face a series of questions to which you must provide answers. This strategy can't guarantee you will predict the exact questions that you'll see on an exam, but it will get you thinking in the ways your professor intends you to be able to think about the course material. How? (There you go again, asking questions.) Essentially, it will be important to base your questions on the key words and phrases you've chosen from your notes and to ask questions at different

levels of thinking. This latter point is perhaps where you'll be in new territory. (see King, 1992; Thorpe, 1992)

You are probably well accustomed to asking the most fundamental questions -- **definition or summary questions**. They begin with "What is the meaning of?" or "The basic idea of is.....". These question frames are easily filled with content words from your courses and can serve very easily to get you started asking yourself questions.

In addition to definition and summary questions are **analytical questions** such as "What are the key aspects of?" and "How does.....relate or compare to?" These analysis questions move you to a deeper level of understanding of your material.

Finally, there are **evaluation questions** such as "What are the strengths and weaknesses of....?" and "Do I agree or disagree with when he or she says....? Why or why not?". These evaluation questions prompt you to think at the level of putting the ideas of your course into real life applications and then determining their effects, good or bad.

Obviously the questions listed at the various levels do not comprise a comprehensive list. There are many many questions that you could ask. Good sources for questions are listening to the questions professors ask in class, the questions that appear in assignments, questions from text books, and so on. The Learning Skills Programme handout on "Reading University Level Materials" and "Preparing for Tests and Exams" deals with this review strategy in more detail.

f. writing preview questions

The review strategy of preparing questions on the material covered in a lecture or in a text book reading can be applied not only as a way to prepare for exams, but to assist you in preparing for an upcoming lecture. Writing preview questions works the same way as applying the questioning technique outlined above, except that you look into the course outline, at lecture titles, and at information in readings that relate to your upcoming lectures for cues about what topics and ideas will be covered. You then ask yourself a series of questions to anticipate the direction of the lecture prior to attending the lecture so that you go in with some idea of where things will be heading. Some of these kind of questions can be borrowed from the concluding statements of a lecture when a professor says something like, "Next time we'll talk about why....." The purpose here isn't to predict exactly what will be covered, but to get you thinking about related information so that you begin listening to a lecture with some pertinent thoughts in mind.

g. consolidating the material

All of these review strategies are essentially geared toward you better summarizing, understanding, and recalling your course materials. When the ideas of your course cease

being separate items of information and begin to coalesce into a unified whole of meaning for the course, where there are themes that are supported by main ideas, main ideas supported by details of various kinds, and connections between the information and other courses and areas of study, then you can be sure that you are consolidating the information. Consolidating literally means “the process of making solid together” -- if you’re shaky on any of the contents of your course, you need to work further to complete your consolidation.

5. Conclusion

Through this handout you’ve learned that the purpose of taking notes at university is to assist you with the tasks of thinking, writing, and preparing for tests and exams. You have learned how it is important to strive to become an active listener who pays attention to lecturer characteristics and features of the lecture (such as introductions, conclusions, repetition, linking expressions, the rephrasing of ideas, and elaboration) in order to select information pertinent to your listening purpose. This handout introduced two note-taking formats, the Cornell Note-taking System and Mind Maps which can be used to organize your notes and prepare them for review. Finally, a series of review strategies (including constructing an outline, writing a summary paragraph, making personal examples, elaborative rehearsal, generating questions, and writing preview materials) were listed to assist you with the task of consolidating your materials. Remember, note-taking and effective listening are skills that improve with instruction and practice.

“Note-taking At University” Summary Sheet

- 1. Try to be an effective listener.** Avoid early judgement of the speaker, pay attention, have an interest, develop a purpose for listening to the lecture. Use your ability to think to summarize the lecture during short pauses and use it to anticipate the direction of the lecture. Above all, avoid the passive listener mentality which says you have to "get it all"; instead, listen for key ideas, main details, and transitional phrases which point to the structure and focus of the lecture.
- 2. Use short forms when recording information.** Point form phrases, abbreviations, symbols and should probably be used in place of full sentences in most situations. Obvious exceptions would be when there's a definition or you don't understand or there is some indication to write something out in full.
- 3. Be alert for both verbal and non-verbal cues.** These indicate structure in the lecture, the relationships among ideas, and importance. These cues include transitional phrases and words, body language, voice tone and pace, repetition of ideas, and the time spent on certain subjects.
- 4. Notes are taken to have a permanent record of the understanding you have of the lecture.** This forms the basis for regular review, exam preparation, critical thinking, and it gives an opportunity to get involved in an exchange of thoughts, an active interaction with the material.
- 5. Be selective.** Take notes which reflect the interests of the professor, themes of the course, keywords or phrases on overheads or chalkboards. Choose information according to your purpose, what you want to learn, and ideas and thoughts which need clarification or which extend prior reading and learning.
- 6. Takes notes according to an organized format.** The organization and relative importance of ideas should be reflected in the notes. Consider a format which promotes returning to them within the first twenty-four hours and which can be used to self-test your understanding of the material. Cornell notes and Mind Maps (mapping notes) are ideal for this purpose.
- 7. Review your notes regularly and cumulatively, looking for developing course themes, and relationships between the ideas of successive lectures.** Doing this regular review can assist you in "seeing the big picture" and makes note-taking a task which is part of an integrated system of study.

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