

Listening and note taking in lectures

Quick study guide

Lecture hints

When you are listening to a lecture, it is impossible to write down all the information presented. You therefore have to make judgments about what information is important and whether to note it down.



1. Your position in the lecture theatre

Don't be frightened of the lecturer. Sit close to the front, and look interested. You will hear and see better, and are more likely to find yourself in the company of committed students.

2. The lecturer's use of voice/body language

The lecturer's use of repetition, a change of tone, meaningful pausing or an upraised finger, etc., may indicate important content. Listen and watch for these signals.



3. Lecture language

A lecture is not a dictation exercise. You need to listen and make your own judgements about what you should write down. The following hints, however, may help you:

Argument structure:

Words such as first, second, also, furthermore, moreover, therefore and finally indicate stages in the lecturer's argument.

But and however indicate a qualification, because a reason, and on the one hand and on the other hand indicate a contrast.



Signalling words:

Introducing the lecture:
"I want to start by ..."

Rephrasing the main point:
"The point I am making ..."

Moving on to another main point:
"I'd like to move on and look at .."

Summing up main points:
"To recapitulate ..."

Introduction of a main point:
"The next point is crucial ..."

Introducing an example:
"Take the case of ..."

A digression:
"That reminds me of ..."



Abbreviations in note taking

Reducing the language - common abbreviations

Arrows

- ↑ an increase
- ↓ a decrease
- causes/leads to/results in
- ← is caused by/is the result of
- ↔ is related to

Mathematical symbols

- . . therefore
- . ∴ because
- = is the same as
- ≠ is not the same as
- > is greater than
- < is less than
- % percent

Emphasise

- Underline
 - Capitalise
 - Highlight
- } To show what is important

Shorten suffixes

- n = tion/sion
- g = ing

Other abbreviations and symbols

- + and
- Ⓐ right
- Ⓛ left
- c/ with
- which
- eg for example
- re concerning
- ca about
- A.M. morning
- P.M. afternoon
- etc. and so on
- N.B note well
- Ⓒ 18th Century
- b/f before
- cf compared
- viz namely
- q.v. refer to, see (often used as a cross reference)
- i.e. that is
- pa per annum, each year
- et al. and others

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