



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. NOTE TAKING 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 terms
- Enhance your physical and mental alertness: eat a snack before class, sit in the front and/or center of the room, focus your attention on the speaker.
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note-taking: a separate notebook with full-sized pages is recommended for each course. You might wish to mark off the pages into one of the formats shown on the reverse of this sheet.
- INTEND TO LISTEN.

DURING CLASS

- Listen for the structure and information in the lecture.
- Resist distractions, emotional reactions or boredom.
- Pay attention to the speaker for verbal and visual clues to what's important.
- Label important points and organizational clues: main points, examples.
- If your lecturer has an accent you find hard to understand or has mannerisms you find distracting, relax and attend even more carefully to the content of the lecture.
- When possible, translate the lecture into your own words, but if you can't, don't let it worry you into inattention!
- Be consistent in your use of form, abbreviation, etc.
- 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 may be of particular value in highlight main points; there may be possible quiz questions, etc.

AFTER CLASS

- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking the teacher or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Make note of your ideas and reflections; keep them separate from the speaker's.
- 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.

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.

The Cornell Note Taking System

