Note-taking
Taking notes in lectures can be a difficult experience. One student commented:

‘We have lecturers who talk at us non-stop, scribbling stuff on the whiteboard all the time, and we’re still trying to get it down minutes after they’ve left the room...’

[quotation from Rowntree, slightly adapted 1998:119]

The power of PowerPoint?

Another stopped going to lectures:

‘It’s a waste of time going to lectures I just download the PowerPoint’

How could the first student overcome his problem?
Do you agree with the second student? Are lectures no longer necessary?

What have lectures been like so far?
How do they differ to your previous experience?

Do you prepare for lectures in any way?
What do you do?
What could you do?
In the lecture
- What makes you listen to certain parts of the lecture more carefully?
- How do you cope with the quantity of information?
- Do you have a particular method?
- What is it?

After the lecture
- Are you happy with your notes?
- Why / Why not?
- If not, what can you do about it?
- Has PowerPoint helped in any way? How?
- In what ways is PowerPoint not helpful?
- Remember that many lectures are recorded, so you can re-watch sections that you didn’t catch.

Some Helpful Ideas?

Preparation strategies
- Have you read the course outline?
- What’s the title of the lecture?
- How does it relate to the other titles in the series?
- What does it mean to you?
- What do you know already?
- (How) does it relate to real-life issues?
- Have you read any of the preliminary reading?

Note taking strategies
- Be prepared: activate your schema
- Don’t try to record everything
- Work in pairs to share tasks
- Develop a system of short hand
- Listen for cues for important points
- Ask the tutor to slow down!
- Sit back and enjoy (if lecture notes are given)
- Try out different strategies

Practising note taking strategies - SQL2R
A balance between listening carefully and taking notes is needed. The SQ3R strategy used for effective reading [Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review] can be adapted to SQL2R:
- Surveying
- Questioning
- Listening & Note taking
- Recall
- Review
Practising note taking strategies: Surveying—signposting

Surveying: listening for signposting by the lecturer:
- I’ll begin by
- Well,
- The first of these settings,
- One of the key questions
- There are 3 main theories....
- So now we’ve come to ....
- To sum up, what we’ve looked at so far

Practising note taking strategies—Questioning

Questioning before the lecture can be helpful, ask yourself:
- What do I want to get out of this lecture?
- How does it fit in with the course?
- What do I already know about this topic?

Practising note taking strategies—recall

Quickly draw a quick mind map, spider diagram or flow chart summarising what you all remember – what were the main points?

Note taking strategies

Unless you have a superb memory, you’ll forget much of what you’ve heard and made notes on. Try to Recall and Review over coffee after the lecture, with one or two others. It’s more enjoyable, efficient and effective as it can promote fruitful discussion. Make it a regular post lecture slot.

Practising note taking strategies—review

Review
- Make questions about the parts you can’t remember (there’ll be fewer if you work together)
- Review your notes to answer the questions & fill in the gaps.
- Make a list of those bits you didn’t understand & re read your notes
Practising note taking strategies: types of notes

If you find that PowerPoint handouts restrict you, try recording your notes in another way:

- Linear notes: with headings & sub-headings; points are numbered sequentially
- Mind maps: suit visual thinkers
- Flow diagrams: suit logical thinkers

Practising note taking strategies: linear notes

Example:

Prepare for the lecture:
- Do prep reading/thinking
- Read through the lecture topic
- Sort out note paper pencils, etc.

In the lecture:
- Be active
- Listen for cues
- Use shorthand/symbols
- Use tape/buddy

After the lecture:
- Talk it over with friends
- Note what you do know/still don’t know
- Summarise it
- Rewite brief neat notes (if necessary)

(Ref. http://www.ex.ac.uk/stf/studyskills/note_taking_appendix_a.htm)

Practising note taking strategies: mind map notes

An example of notes in the form of a mind map from Tony Buzan. Note the use of colour & space

Practising note taking strategies: flow diagram notes

An example of notes in the form of a flow diagram

Note taking strategies: lecture details

Also record on each page:
- Course title- abbreviations
- Lecture title
- Lecturer name or initials
- Date
- Page number
- Sub topic? [Helps you locate topics]

This can help you to avoid plagiarism & keep track of your notes 6 months on

Post lecture summary notes

Date
Course
Lecturer

Overview: what was the lecture about?
Key vocabulary:
Key concepts/theories:

Issues/questions to be raised in seminar:
Note taking in lectures- symbols & abbreviations

Developing a clear system of ‘shorthand’ using abbreviations helps save time writing, reading and reviewing. It also helps you focus on the key points.

Note taking in lectures- abbreviations
- e.g. for example
- i.e. that is
- etc. etcetera: and so on
- N.B. note
- Q. question
- No. number
- probs. problems
- p./pp page/pages
- 1st first
- max. maximum
- c. about
- imp important
- sit. situation
- ref. reference
- thro/thru approximately
- eval evaluation
- analy analysis
- diff/diff. difficult/difficult
- diff.t different

Note taking in lectures- using symbols
What symbols would you use for?
therefore
because
statement/answer is correct
statement/answer is wrong
question; is the statement correct?
and/plus
ditto (means the same as the words immediately above the ditto marks)
does not equal, differs from, is the opposite of is/are/have/has/equals
leads to/results in/causes
does not lead to/result in/cause

Note taking in lectures- asking for clarification
To take notes more effectively you may need, to ask questions for clarification. Some time is usually given for this at the end of a lecture.
Think of some questions that you can ask to make a lecturer easier to understand
If you’re too shy you can also ask these questions in the follow up seminar

Note taking in lectures- asking for clarification
- I’m afraid I didn’t follow your point about…Could you go over that again?
- Could you go over [again] what you said about ..
- Could you explain what you meant when you said that?
- Could you be more specific about …?
- Could you expand a little on what you said about…?
Note taking in lectures - further help

For further help, go to ‘Structure’ at http://www.uefap.co.uk/listen/listfram.htm

Try this quiz and listening task: http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/listening_to_lectures.html