

## **A System for Effective Listening and Note-taking**

The experts say that you can think about four 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 in 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. (Do you have questions to ask about this lesson?)
- 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 technical terms, etc.
- Do what you can to improve physical and mental alertness. Remember that fatigue, hunger, time of day and where you sit in the classroom all affect motivation.
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note-taking; a separate notebook with full-sized pages is recommended for each course. (You might organize your class notebooks by getting a different colored notebook for each class.)
- Intend to listen.

### **During Class**

- Listen for the structure & information in the lecture.
- Resist distractions, emotional reactions, or boredom. (Keep your headphones and phone in your backpack.)
- Be consistent in your use of form: abbreviations, etc.
- Pay attention to speaker for verbal, postural, and visual clues to what is important.
- Label important points and organizational clues: main points and examples.
- When possible, translate the lecture into your own words, but if you cannot, do not let it worry you into inattention. (Re-write your notes in your dorm! It will be a good chance to go over what you just learned.)
- If you feel you do not take enough notes, divide your page into five sections and try to fill each part every 10 minutes (or work out your own formula).
- Ask questions if you do not understand. (Professors take notice when you ask questions!)
- 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 highlighting main points; there may be other important material, possible quiz questions, etc. (You will make it to your next class, promise.)

### **After Class**

- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking either the instructor or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- 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.
- Make note of your ideas and reflections, keeping them separate from those of the speaker.

### **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 and methods of presentation over the course of several lectures.
- Make up and answer possible test questions (especially if your professor says it will be on the exam!).