**Be Alert for Signals of Importance.**

As you can see, good listening and note-taking are special skills. When following lectures, for example, you want to be alert to the "signals" that lecturers give to indicate that certain material is important, that help you in further organizing your notes for later study and review. There are five such signals:

1. Write down whatever your teacher puts on the blackboard. Ideally, print this material in large letters. If you don't have time to print, write as you usually do and put the letters OB in the margin to indicate that the material was written on the board. When you review your notes later, you will know what ideas the teacher emphasized.

2. Always write down definitions and enumerations. Most people instinctively will write down definitions - explanations of key terms in the subject being studied. But people often forget or ignore enumerations, which are often just as important. An enumeration is simply a list of items (marked 1,2,3 or with other symbols) that fit under a particular heading. Teachers often use enumerations, or lists, to show the relationship among a group of ideas. They are signaled in such ways as: "The four steps in the process are....."; "There were three main ideas expressed in the novel...."; "The two primary effects were..."

3. Your instructor might say, "This is an important concept..."; or "One point that will repeat itself in the material..."; or "The primary cause was...."; or "Pay special attention to..."; or "The basic idea here is..."; or "The thesis being advanced is..."; and so forth. You want to make sure to write down important statements announced by these and other emphasis words, and mark imp or some other mark of your own choosing (one that you can quickly and easily make out) to show their importance;

4. If the lecturer repeats a point, you can usually assume that it is important or relevant. You might even write R in the margin to indicate that it was repeated in order to know that the instructor stressed the idea in class; and finally,

5. A lecturer's voice may slowdown, become louder, or otherwise signal that you are to write down exactly what is being said, word for word. When this happens, do it!

**Write Down Examples.**

This is so obvious that people sometimes forget to do it, or take it for granted and then forget to do so. Write down any examples the teacher might provide during the course of a lecture, and then mark them with ex. These examples help you understand complex, abstract forms and concepts. If you don't mark them with ex , then you are likely to forget their purpose when you later review them for study. You do not have to write down every single example, but you should do at least one to help clarify the point(s) being made.

**Write Down Details That Connect or Explain.**

Always write down the details that connect or explain main points. Too many students copy only the major points the teachers puts on the blackboard. These students don't understand that as time passes during the semester, they may (and will)forget the specifics that serve as connecting bridges between ideas. Make certain, then, to record the connecting details that the instructor provides. When you do, you are much more likely to remember and recall those relationships among the major points in your notes.

**Leave Some Blank Spaces.**

Leave some blank spaces for those ideas or items you miss. Immediately after class, ask another student to help you fill in the blank spaces. A good idea during the first week of class is to identify someone in the class you can work with. Exchange telephone numbers, making certain to indicate the best time to call. This way you are covered for the semester, especially for those times—and they do happen—when something comes up and you can't make it to class that day. One thing, though, is not to make it a habit of missing classes. Your study friend can easily become annoyed, and feel that they are being misused, when they become the person receiving all the telephone calls for missed lectures. It is also a good idea to ask the instructor at the beginning of the semester if it is permissible to tape lectures. This is another way to cover yourself for missed information.

**Ask Questions.**

In a word, get involved with the subject matter and the instructor. Don't hesitate to ask questions is certain points are confusing to you. Draw the line, however, at asking too many questions, or asking questions simply to be heard. Most instructors frown on this type of behavior from students. But keep in mind when asking serious, relevant questions that other students in the class probably have the same questions in mind but are reluctant to ask them. Teachers do look favorably upon students who show interest and curiosity in the subject.

**Take Notes during Discussions.**

Most students miss out on this most valuable of opportunities. They somehow perceive it in their minds as a sort of "time out" from class. The point is that you do not want to stop taking notes during discussion periods. There are lots of invaluable ideas that can and do come up during informal sessions, ideas that your instructor may not present later on. If your instructor puts notes on the board during a discussion period, you can take that as a good sign that the material is important. If the instructor pursues a point brought up during the discussion or takes the class in a certain direction based upon a point brought up during the discussion, then that is a strong bit of evidence that you should be taking notes. And always keep in mind the note from the first step: when in doubt, write it down.

**Take Notes Right Up to the End of Class.**

Nothing is more irritating to an instructor than to see students start putting away their notebooks and pens when there are 3-4 minutes left in the class. It is as though the student is saying that nothing important will be said at the end. Keep in mind that very often, because of time spent on discussions, teachers may have critical points they want to cover in those closing minutes of class and they will use that time to cram in that last bit of information which might just be the summary for the entire period. Be ready to write as rapidly as you can to get down this final rush of ideas.

**Review Your Notes Soon.**

Go over your notes soon after class. While the material is still fresh in your mind, make your notes as clear as possible. A day later may be too late because forgetting sets in almost at once. The best time to start studying your notes is within a day after taking them. Because of the mind's tendency to forget material rapidly, a few minutes et aside for study soon after class will give you more learning for less time and effort than almost any other technique you can practice.

Now that you have developed your notes, you need to go over how to study class notes. The following is one effective way to do so:

Use the margin at the side or top of each page. Jot down in the margin a series of key words or phrases from your notes. These key words or phrases, known as recall words , will help you in pulling together and remembering the important ideas on the page;

To test yourself on the material, turn those recall words in the margin into questions. For instance, you might ask yourself, "What are recall words?" If you follow this approach on a regular basis, it will certainly help you remember the material covered in your classes. By using this method, you will not be left with a great deal of material to organize and learn right before an exam. Instead, you will be able to devote quality time before that examination to a final intensive review of the subject matter.

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