Taking Notes in Lectures

Purpose of Lectures

The purpose of a lecture is not to tell you all you need to know about the subject, or to summarise your textbook. Rather a lecture should:

- encourage critical thinking about the subject
- indicate the scope of the subject
- emphasise key elements of knowledge
- give evidence and examples
- suggest sources of further information and ideas.

Purpose of Notetaking

The purpose of notetaking is to encode and to store key information from the lecture.

**Encoding:** helps to imprint information on the brain.

**Storage:** creates a resource for revision.

Notetaking Hints

Notes should include:

- Date and time of lecture
- Title/theme of lecture
- Lecturer's name
- Key points
- Sub points
- References

Practical hints for lecture notetaking

- Leave plenty of white space so you can add to your notes when you learn more about the topic.
• Develop a note-taking method and stick to it – consistency will help with organisation and review. See the following examples of different note-taking methods

• One of the most important lecture notetaking strategies is to get to lectures on time. It is often in the first few minutes that the lecturer will explain:
  
  o the **topic** of the lecture (eg Today’s lecture is about X…)
  o the **main purpose/argument/idea** of the lecture (eg. The main point I want to make today is that …)
  o the **structure** of the lecture (eg. First I’m going to look at A and then I’ll say a bit about B, and finally ….).

• Think about the following points in regard to your notetaking

  *The lecturer’s use of voice/body language*

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

  *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.

  (a) **Lecture 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.

  (b) "**Signalling**" words (used to indicate parts of the lecture):

  *Introducing the lecture:*  "I want to start by …"

  *Introduction of a main point:*  "The next point is crucial …"

  *Rephrasing the main point*  "The point I am making …"

  *Introducing an example:*  "Take the case of …"

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

  *A digression:*  "That reminds me of …"

  *Summing up main points:*  "To recapitulate …"
Notetaking Methods

Example notetaking style with notes organised under headings with space for additions.

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**Gases + Gas Laws cont.**
- gas = fluid wh. fills any container it occupies
- gas can be compressed to smaller volume
- gas = indiv molecules bound tog by very weak forces

**Gas pressure**
- gas puts pressure on walls
- gas molecules always in motion = steady force on walls = no. of collisions with walls
- pressure relates to no. of molecules inside container

**Measuring gas pressure**
- by measuring force/unit area + balancing against known force/da
- example piston
- height of column of eg mercury < barometer
- so measurement is
  - mm of mercury = mmHg

**Universal Ideal Gas Law**
- \( pV = nRT \)

- pressure reflects
- Average Velocity
- of molecules

- changes in physical conditions \( \rightarrow \) changes in property of gas sample

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**Reading**
- Atkins + Beran ch 5.1 - 5.3

**Problems**
- 5.8 + 5.15 (equation)
Abbreviations in Notetaking

Reducing the Language - Common Abbreviations

**Arrows**

\[ \uparrow \quad \text{an increase} \]

\[ \downarrow \quad \text{a decrease} \]

\[ \rightarrow \quad \text{causes/leads to/results in} \]

\[ \leftarrow \quad \text{is caused by/is the result of} \]

\[ \leftrightarrow \quad \text{is related to} \]

**Mathematical symbols**

\[ \therefore \quad \text{therefore} \]

\[ \because \quad \text{because} \]

\[ = \quad \text{is the same as} \]

\[ \neq \quad \text{is not the same as} \]

\[ > \quad \text{is greater than} \]

\[ < \quad \text{is less than} \]

\[ \% \quad \text{percent} \]

\[ + \quad \text{and} \]

\[ \odot \quad \text{right} \]

\[ \odot \quad \text{left} \]

**Emphasise**

Underline

Capitalize to show what is important

Highlight

**Shorten suffixes**

\[ n \quad \text{tion/sion} \]

\[ g \quad \text{ing} \]