

Getting the Most From Lectures



Students who learn successfully from lectures usually engage in the following behaviours:

Arrive Prepared

Arriving to lectures prepared means that you've reviewed notes from prior lectures, checked the course outline for the day's lecture topic, completed any assigned reading material, and that you've begun to anticipate what the lecture will be about. Being prepared also means arriving on time with all necessary materials (paper, pen, etc.).

Choose a Good Seat

The best seat is one that will minimize potential distractions to you during the lecture. Distractions can come from windows and doorways, noise from other people, and talking with friends. Find a seat that will help you focus on the professor only; ensure you can see and hear well.

Listen Carefully

Careful listening involves four components: identifying the central theme of the lecture, identifying all main ideas and supporting details such as explanations and examples, thinking about how the ideas are related to one another, and anticipating what is coming next. One way to make classes meaningful is to create questions for yourself before class and then listen for the answers during the lecture.

Enjoy the Lecture

Being well-rested will help you concentrate during class. Think of ways to make the information interesting for yourself (or at least memorable). Develop an inquisitive nature by asking yourself "why" questions as material is being presented.

LEARNING

DEVELOPMENT & SUCCESS



Students who learn successfully from lectures usually *avoid* the following:

Taping Lectures

Taping lectures is inefficient for most students. Taping encourages students to be passive during class, whereas writing notes helps to stay engaged with the ideas. Most people can't realistically commit the extra time it takes to listen to tapes after class, so the content often piles up and is neglected. It is imperative that students obtain permission prior to taping any lecture to ensure copyright laws are not violated.

Relying on Someone Else's Notes

Some professors provide PowerPoint outlines; remember that these are outlines only and need to be supplemented with supporting details from class. A classmate's notes can be helpful as a comparison after class, but they should never be a substitute for your own version. Your own notes are the most meaningful to you as you can leave space for later additions, and record in a way that makes sense to you. If your own notes aren't helpful, it would be wise to [meet with a Learning Development counsellor](#) to develop this skill.

Missing Class

Unless you're ill, it should never be a decision of whether or not to go to class - just go! Attending class is part of your job as a student. It's a way of demonstrating respect to your professors and to yourself. Why should your professors offer extra help (for example, with understanding material or providing reference letters) if you have missed lectures? Missing class quite simply makes it more difficult and time-consuming to learn information.