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Motivating and Teaching Your Students to Take Good Lecture Notes

HOW TODAY'S STUDENTS TAKE NOTES

The average lecture contains _____ spoken words.

The average student writes down _____ of those words in his/her lecture notes.

_____ % of chalkboard info

Johnston, A.H. & Su, W.Y. (1994). Lectures—A learning experience? *Education in Chemistry* (May), 70-76.

Average notetakers record _____ % of important ideas.

Kiewra, K.A. (2005). *Learn how to succeed and SOAR to success*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Best notetakers record < _____ % of critical ideas; freshmen only _____ %.

Kiewra, K.A. (1985). Providing the instructor's notes: An effective addition to student notetaking. *Educational Psychologist* 20, 33-39.

% students with decent notes: _____ %

Most freq inaccuracies:

Missing:

Johnston & Su (1994)

MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO TAKE GOOD NOTES - BENEFITS

Why don't students take good notes, or take notes at all?

Kiewra (1985); Johnston & Su (1994); Potts, B. (1993). Improving the quality of student notes. ERIC Document
Reproduction Services: ED366645; Bligh, D.A. (2000). *What's the use of lecture?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

MINI-CASE: A recent transplant from Prepscul University to Squirrel State, psychology professor Joe Winnebago frequently gives interactive lectures to his large classes. He imparts important knowledge beyond what is in the assigned readings and tells his students that they will be held responsible for this additional material on tests. He doesn't rehash the readings in his PowerPoint slides, though he does show drawings and photographs of physiological features of plants, animals, and microbes, which students can download. Shortly before the first exam, a student named Brittany comes to see him for help in identifying the really important lecture material and shows him her notes. He finds them incomprehensible, with little more written than terms, numbers, and scientists' names he put on the board. What can Joe do to help this student *at this point?*

Your Ideas:

Ideas from others:

HELP STUDENTS MAKE GOOD NOTES

One theme/topic w/ 1-3 main points per lecture

Skeletal notes for students to download

Teach students taking vs. *making* notes (process)

2-min break - revision

Carter, J.F. & Van Matre, N.H. (1975, May). Note taking versus note having. *J Educ Psych* 67 (6), 900-904.
Bentley, D.A. & Blount, H.P. (1980). Testing the spaced lecture for the college classroom. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Georgia Psychology Assn, Macon.

2-min break - pair review & revision

O'Donnell, A. & Dansereau, D.F. (1993). Learning from lecture: Effects of cooperative review. *J Experimental Education* 61 (2), 116-125.
Kelly, A.E. and O'Donnell, A. (1994). Hypertext and the study strategies of preservice teachers: Issues in instructional hypertext design. *J Educ Computing Research* (10) 4, 373-387.

Model & show YOUR notes once or twice

Teach students systems

1. *Outlining*

- I. Main topics at left of paper, near margin.
 - A. Indent statements subordinate to the preceding one.
 - 1. Minor sub-topic (indented under A)
 - 2. Minor sub-topic (indented under A)
 - a. Detail (under 2)
 - b. Detail (under 2)
 - c. etc.
 - 3. etc.
 - B. Major sub-topic
 - 1. Minor sub-topic (coordinate or equal statements are indented the same distance).
 - a. Detail (under 1)
 - b. etc.
 - 2. Keep beginnings of all lines belonging to coordinate or equal statements even with the line of indentation
 - C. etc.
- II. Continue in the same way

2. *Cornell System w/ 5 R's* – handout

3. *Concept/Mind Mapping* – handout

Problems:

Good use:

Teach students abbreviations – eg

Yours:

Others:

End class with CAT to make students review

Make the Most of Taking Lecture Notes

In many of your classes, your instructor lectures on or makes a presentation about a topic, usually one that's related to the current subject you're studying. Your job as a student is to take notes to jog your memory about the key points being presented.

Instead of writing down every word, listen — *really* listen — and put the information in perspective. Consider the highlights of what you're hearing could be used on a test or as content for an essay. Also, don't worry about what your classmates are recording. You may see another student writing furiously, but trust your own judgment in taking notes. Even when you've figured out how to hone in on the important stuff, you may have trouble transferring all the major points from a lecture onto a page. So use the following shortcuts to make note-taking easier.

- For lecture notes, include the date, instructor, and title of the lecture (if there is one). You may also include the textbook chapter, part, or pages on which the lecture is based.
- If the lecture is based on a reading assignment, make sure you've done the reading and, perhaps, even taken notes on the reading. If you know the material from the reading assignment, you'll have a good idea of the structure of the lecture, as well as the key points. This helps you decide what to note and what to let pass. Also, if the instructor's lecture is based entirely on the reading assignment, refer to the reading assignment as you take notes. If the instructor adds facts, concepts, or new ideas or disagrees with the reading assignment, these are alerts that you should be paying attention and taking notes on these ideas.
- If your teacher provides an overview of the lecture, structure your notes in an outline form so that you can understand how the ideas relate. After class, you can (and should) go back and revise your notes if the structure and organization of the lecture isn't clear.
- Instead of trying to record what the instructor says word-for-word, paraphrase the ideas in your own words. At the same time, do note key concepts or terms, even if you don't know what they mean. Flag them to look the meanings up later. If you aren't sure of the spelling, make a note ("sp?") next to the term so that you can later check the spelling and/or meaning.
- Seek to capture the main ideas, and then leave blanks to go back and fill in the detail. For example, if the instructor is talking about the five events leading up to the Civil War, it's more important to write down the events than make complete descriptions of each event.
- Add your own thoughts about what the information means and how it connects to other concepts you've learned in class. Also record any questions you have (or questions you think the instructor may ask on a test based on the lecture content). For example, in a lecture on Shakespeare, you might discover and note, "I think this theme also occurs in Richard III."
- Use abbreviations for common words, and your own abbreviations, as long as you remember what they mean. For example, you might use "pt" to mean point and shorten names to initials (NB or N for Napoleon Bonaparte). Here are some common abbreviations:
w/ (with) w/o (without) b/c (because) @ (about) = (equals)
- Leave out time-consuming words like "the," "in," "for," "be," "are," and so on.
- Don't write complete sentences. For example, jot down "Halle Berry = first actress of color to win Best Actress Oscar."
- Use a graphical structure for your notes (for example, indenting lines, drawing arrows, using bullets) to show how information is related.

If you revisit your notes and can't make sense of what you've written down, make a mental note of what methods work well for you. Note-taking gets better with practice.

<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-131130.html>