

SWOT Lecture Series: LEARNING TO LEARN

Lectures and how to use them

Outline of Lecture

- Part 1: to give you some useful strategies for:
- getting the most out of your lectures
 - taking more effective notes
- Part 2: to practice those strategies

PART 1: Strategies for lectures

Advantages of lectures can be:

- most efficient way to communicate with a large number of students
- can be an inspiring model of expertise

Disadvantages of lectures can be

- require students to be active learners
- can be difficult to become involved

General purpose of lectures

‘to put in context, expand upon, enliven and update
the information contained in course material’

(ref: Morris et al ,1984, Laying down the law: the foundations of legal reasoning, research and writing in Australia)

Some of the things lectures can do for you

- give you an overview of a topic, how it fits in and what controversies exist.
- provide a common ground/ reference point for discussion in a subject.
- serve as a starting point for private study.
- draw together the main ideas in a research area.
- provide a preliminary map of difficult reading material.

Your role: to get the most out of the presentation. Remember:

lectures are expert input - you can't get this from your reading list.

Seven steps to success

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| Step 1 | Prepare. |
| Step 2 | Get there in time to choose a seat that enables you to hear, see and concentrate: |
| Step 3 | Get there in time to hear the introduction to the lecture. |
| Step 4 | Listen actively |
| Step 5 | Take sensible notes. |
| Step 6 | Stay to the end. |
| Step 7 | As soon as possible after the lecture, go over your notes, check out the references. |

STEP 1 PREPARE

Think about

- (1) how useful this particular lecture might be in achieving your purposes in learning.
- (2) where the topic fits into the broader framework of the course.

Read

- (3) the topic of the lecture and ask yourself questions about it before the lecture starts.
- (4) your notes from the previous lecture in the series
- (5) recommended readings / chapters in textbooks before the lecture and note key terms and concepts.

STEP 3 THE INTRODUCTION TO THE LECTURE

This is very important and may contain:

- (a) revision of material from an earlier lecture
- (b) a statement about the topic of the lecture
- (c) information about what to read for the next lecture
- (d) a joke or amusing story
- (e) announcements about timetables/arrangements for the course
- (f) an outline of the main points to be covered in the whole lecture

STEP 4 - LISTEN ACTIVELY

- a) **Identify the structure of the lecture** - usually in the introduction
- b) **identifying the main points:** language clues

When you take notes, you will need to select what you write down: usually the main points, and perhaps some subordinate or subsidiary points which relate to the main points. It is useful to identify the language that is being used to signal main points and subordinate points.

- Introduce a main point

The next point is of major significance...
The main point to remember is...
The next point is crucial...

- Emphasise a main point

I repeat that...
As I said before...
The crux of what I've been saying is...
This is crucial to the argument that...

- Show the relationship with a main point

As a result...
Thus we can see...

- Introduce an example

For example.../ For instance...
A case in point...
Let me illustrate this by...
Take the case of ...

- Introduce a digression

*Incidentally, ...
I might just mention...
By the way...
That reminds me of...
A side issue to the question is...*

- Rephrase a main point

*Let me put that another way...
In other words...
What I mean by this is...
... by which I mean...*

- Sum up

*If I can just sum up...
To recapitulate...
To conclude then...*

c) Identify recycled information

- *Reiteration* Saying the same thing again in the same or more or less the same words.
- *Reformulation* Saying the same thing again in different words.
- *Summarising* Repeating main ideas in a briefer form.

d) Transitions

Lecturers usually indicate in some way when they are moving from one section of the lecture to the next. They may signal this in the following ways:

- *Intonation*

Falling intonation followed by a pause often marks the end of a section. A rise to a noticeably higher pitch often follows, marking the beginning of the next section.

- *Marker words*

Some words which indicate a transition from one section to the next are:

Well..., Right..., OK..., Now..., So...

- *Marker phrases*

For example:

I'd like to move on now to look at ...

Well, that's about all I have to say about ... I think I'll move along to ...

Moving right along now ...

Having considered ... let's move on to consider ...

- *Body language*

Lecturers may change body position or have some characteristic action or facial expression which indicates a transition.

STEP 5. TAKING NOTES IN LECTURES: BEING BRIEF

Who is going to read your notes?

Common abbreviations.

Abbreviation	Meaning
e.g.	for example
cf.	compare (d) with
etc.	etcetera, and so on...
N.B.	note well
i.e.	that is, in other words
b/w	between
re.	about
wrt.	with respect to
vs	versus
viz.	namely

Using symbols:

for example (e.g.) =, ?, + , arrows up and down, mathematical symbols (greater than, smaller than) etc.

Persistent problems with notetaking

- (1) Tape record the lecture. (ask the lecturer's permission)
- (2) Make sure you are preparing thoroughly for lectures.
- (3) Compare your notes with someone else's and discuss the different ways of presenting the same material.
- (4) Read more on the topic so that the lecture isn't your only source of information on the topic.
- (5) If the same course took place the previous year, find a student in the year above you who has a set of lecture notes and who is willing to let you look at them. Read through these in preparation for the lecture. Remember, of course, that lectures can change from year to year!

DOs AND DON'Ts FOR IMPROVING NOTE-TAKING

1. DON'T try to note every word.	DO note key words.
2. DON'T write words in full.	DO use abbreviations & symbols.
3. DON'T take notes as if you were writing an essay.	DO use the space on your paper to organise the information and visually represent the relationship between ideas.
4. DON'T note indiscriminately.	DO evaluate as you listen. Decide what is important and relevant and what is irrelevant.
5. DON'T be a passive listener.	DO be an active listener. Predict lecture content and organisation.
6. DON'T give up if you miss information.	DO make guesses if you miss something. Remember that lecturers usually repeat and paraphrase information.
7. DON'T listen for details before getting the larger picture.	DO listen for the main points and for the general organisational framework.

STEP 7 AFTER THE LECTURE

- (1) Try to review your notes as soon as possible after the lecture.
 - (2) Check that you understand your notes. If not, check your understanding with the lecturer, a friend, or in your reading.
 - (3) Check that you can identify the structure of the lecture - main points, sub-points and how the lecture developed from one point to another.
 - (4) Edit your notes where necessary. Underline main points; add numbering and sub-heading; expand points where your notes are not clear. However, it is not a good idea, unless you are very unhappy with your notes, to rewrite the lecture notes.
 - (5) Consider whether it would be useful to express parts of the lecture in another form: a table, a diagram, or a flow chart, for example.
 - (6) Note connections between your lecture notes and what you have read or heard in other lectures.
 - (7) Review your lecture notes again as often as possible.
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