

## How to Improve Your Listening and Note-Taking Skills

Listening, like reading, must be active; it involves constant thinking, evaluating and making connections. By improving your listening skills you will be able to take more comprehensive notes during a lecture, and will *definitely* absorb more information.

Below are some suggestions to help you improve your listening skills:

1. Know the subject in advance by **reviewing** the reading material/notes from the last class or by **previewing** the next chapter. Pay attention to technical terms, main ideas, etc. Look up difficult vocabulary.
2. Write down a list of questions about the material. Even though the class might not be discussion oriented, you should **listen for the answers** to your questions. Write these answers down in your notebook or on the sheet of paper where you have written your questions.
3. Sit near the front of the class and away from the windows. Distractions prevent active listening. Also avoid sitting next to friends *if* they tend to chat during class or pass notes.
4. Practice “attending behavior” (i.e. **LOOK** like you’re listening: sit straight up in seat and lean forward; keep your eyes open wide and look directly at lecturer; *intend* to listen).
5. If you find yourself drifting off or lost, *refocus* your attention by asking yourself any of the following questions: How does this information relate to the subject at hand? How does it increase my understanding of the topic? How does it relate to the reading? How does it connect with the material we learned about in the last class?
6. Use abbreviation for words that frequently appear in specific courses; write out the code on the top of the first page of notes. (Ex: natural = nt'l; reading = rdg; government = gov't; Russian Revolution = R.Rev, etc.) Use symbols for frequently used ideas. (Ex: *Leads to* = \_\_\_\_\_; *results in* = \_\_\_\_\_; *because* = b/c; *change* = \_\_\_\_\_; *without* = w/o).
7. Listen for and note main ideas; indent sub-points under main ideas to create a visual impression; leave a lot of space (lines) between main ideas so you can fill in details later.
8. Resist the temptation to copy down the professor’s lecture word for word. Listen for the important information and paraphrase it in your notes. Try to listen to two or three sentences before you begin writing.
9. If the professor is an unorganized lecturer, make a rough outline (I. = main idea; A. = Supporting ideas; 1. = detail) on some blank notepaper and fill it in during class.
10. When class is over, reread and correct your notes as soon as possible (within 24 hours). Review notes with a friend and try to recreate the lecture. Share information.