

STUDY GUIDE: Listening to Lectures & Taking Notes

Let's get on with it



What is LISTENING?

Listening is a learning tool that requires you to concentrate on what you hear, to enable your brain to process it and derive meaning out of it

Hearing is a spontaneous act. Listening, by contrast, is something you consciously choose to do.

Academic listening is a complex task. There are many skills involved in listening to lectures successfully. Look at the list below and identify which areas are the most problematic for you.

What Academic Listening Entails

- identifying purpose and scope of the lecture
- identifying topic of lecture and following topic development
- identifying relationships among units within discourse (e.g. major ideas, generalisations, hypotheses, supporting ideas, examples)
- inferring relationships (e.g. cause, effect, conclusion)
- deducing meanings of words from their context
- recognising the function of intonation to signal information structure (e.g. pitch, volume, pace)

- detecting attitude of speaker toward subject matter
- following lecture despite differences in accent and speed
- becoming familiar with different styles of lecturing: formal, conversational, read, unplanned
- recognising irrelevant matter: jokes, digressions, meanderings
- recognising the function of non-verbal cues as markers of emphasis and attitude

Hint: To get the most out of a lecture, you will need to:

- read before the lecture.
- keep a questioning mind during the lecture.
- reflect after the lecture.

Before the Lecture

01 Before attending the lecture, read about the topic from at least one source to grasp the key vocabulary. This is especially helpful if the lecturer has an accent that is unfamiliar to you or if he/she speaks very quickly.

02 As you wait for the lecture to begin, think about the topic and ask yourself what questions you expect the lecturer to answer.

03 Head your paper with:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Course number</i>
<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Date</i>

If you later wish to refer to the lecture in an essay as a source you will then have the details you need.

01 During the Lecture

Listen ACTIVELY

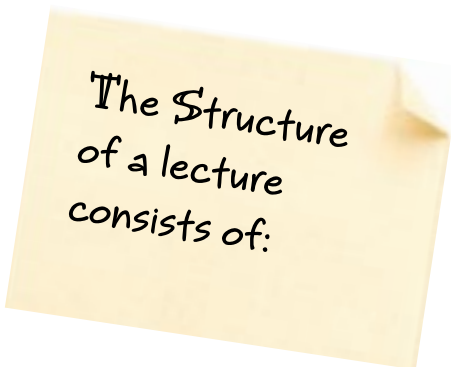


As you listen ask yourself questions such as the following:

- Where does this information come from?
- What is the evidence for this argument?
- Doesn't this contradict what X said?

Make Connections

Make connections with what you already know and modify these ideas as a result.



- a) main theme of the lecture.
- b) main points which develop this theme.
- c) sub sections of main points.
- d) examples, explanations and definitions.

Hint: Note that it is easy to remember examples, but you must be clear what general point the example is illustrating.

Identifying the structure

- The lecturer often gives an outline of the sections at the beginning of the lecture so don't be late or you will miss this vital information.

- The pitch and volume of the lecturer's voice, and his/her pauses and gestures often give clues about the structure or the relative importance of points.
- Lecturers use signal/transition words which indicate, for example, listing of causes/effects etc.; contrast; emphasis of a main point. (See more examples below)
- He/She may conclude with a summary, which helps you to check that you have recognised the main points.

EXAMPLES OF SIGNAL OR TRANSITION WORDS

Listen for words and phrases that signal or provide clues to the structure of the lecture. Below are some examples.

Emphasising a point
Above all do not forget that ...
The next point crucial to my argument ...
It is important to note that ...

Listing points

<i>firstly</i>	<i>thirdly</i>
<i>in the first place</i>	<i>my next point is</i>
<i>secondly</i>	<i>lastly/finally</i>

Introducing examples

<i>for instance</i>	<i>for example</i>
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MORE EXAMPLES OF SIGNAL OR TRANSITION WORDS

Showing a cause/effect relationship
so, therefore, thus *because*
since

Introducing a contrasting or opposing idea
but *and yet*
nevertheless *on the one hand...*
on the other hand... *although*

Summing up
to summarise *it amounts to this*
in other words *if I can sum up*

Signalling a digression
By the way, you may be interested to know
We may note in passing



What is NOTE-Taking?

Note-taking is an activity which requires you to actively listen to, and understand information before putting it down in note form.

How to Take Effective Notes

- 01** Arrange your notes to make the structure clear. For example
 - MAIN HEADING
 - Sub heading
 - Further details
- 02** Use note form but not complete sentences, and avoid copying down every word.
- 03** Include an accurate copy of the diagrams the lecturer gives.
- 04** Note down key words and headings from the board or OHP.
- 05** Use abbreviations. Here are some examples:

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

Some useful abbreviations and symbols for note taking

cf.	compare
e.g.	for example etc
etc.	et cetera, and so on
et al	and others
ibid	in the same place (in a book or article)
i.e.	that is
N.B.	note well
viz	namely
max	maximum
min	minimum
w.r.t.	with respect to
∴	therefore, thus, so
∵	because
=	is equal to, the, same as
≠	is not equal to, not the same as
+	plus, and, more
-	minus, less
>	greater than
<	less than
≈	approximately
⇒	can be transformed into

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS (cont'd)

Some useful abbreviations and symbols for note taking

∨	decrease
↗	increase
>>	much greater than
<<	much less than
Δ	equal to, or greater than
%	per cent
÷	divide, divided by
x	multiply, multiplied by, insert (something which has been omitted)
→	from...to, leads to, results

After the Lecture

- 01** Check through your notes and make improvements for future learning, for example, number, highlight or underline points.
- 02** Compare your notes with a friend to make your record more accurate and to help understand the topic in depth.
- 03** Check whether you understand all that you have written. Remember that it is what is understood that is remembered. Beside sections that you don't understand write questions to ask at your tutorials.
- 04** Summarize the main points at the end of your notes or on a separate sheet to use for revision purposes.
- 05** Review the above summaries often to help you make connections with previous and later lectures, so that you begin to see a network or unity in the course content.

EXAMPLES OF OUTLINE FORMATS

STANDARD FORM

1. MAIN TOPIC (key ideal)
 - A. Subtopic (main point)
 1. Supporting detail
 2. Supporting detail
 - B. Subtopic
 - C. Subtopic
 1. Supporting detail
 - a. Explanatory detail
 - (i) Further support

NUMBER SYSTEM

- 1.0 Main Topic
- 1.1 Subtopic
 - 1.1.1 Supporting detail
 - 1.1.2 Supporting detail
- 1.2 Subtopic
 - 1.3 Subtopic
 - 1.3.1 Supporting detail
 - 1.3.2 Explanatory detail
 - 1.3.3 Further support