

# Learning from Lectures

## Being an Effective Listener





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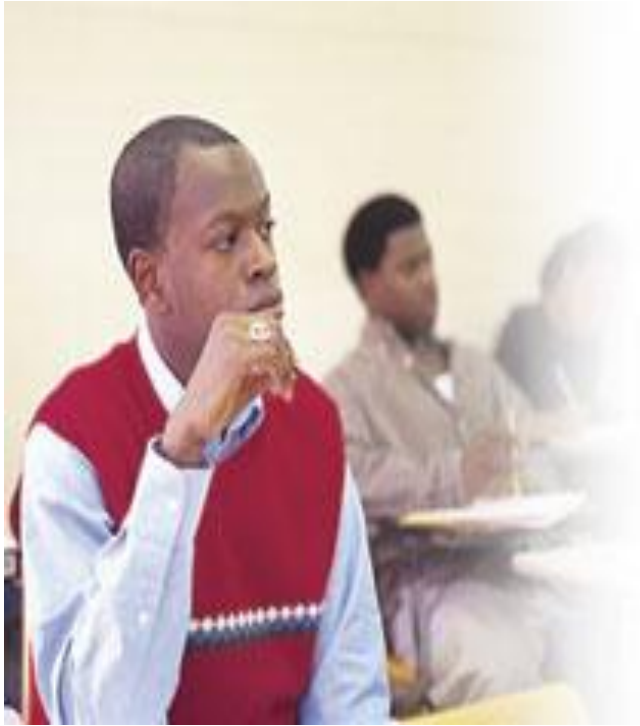
**Listening, sifting through information, and taking accurate, detailed lecture notes are some of the most important skills students need for learning at the college level.**

# The Lecture

The professor decides what topics the lecture will cover, as well as how quickly the information will be presented.



Your job is to listen.



Listening is one of the most important, yet least recognized, skills necessary for learning from lectures.

Most students don't naturally listen in the way that the lecture setting demands.

## Are you an effective listener?

# To listen *effectively* you must

- Engage the speaker - create an internal conversation between you and the instructor.
- Actively anticipate and question what the lecturer says.
- Sort or categorize the information being presented.
- Sit where you can maintain good eye contact and hear clearly.
- Read over your notes from the previous class and do any assigned readings *BEFORE* the lecture.

Listening effectively is important because 80% of what you learn is acquired through listening.

Listening is a skill that requires the constant application of certain principles until they become habitual.

In other words...

Listening effectively takes practice!

# Listening Principles

Be prepared to listen by keeping up to date with your textbook reading. Read the chapter ***before*** the lecture!

Determine the main idea and all important details that were given in connection with it.

Learn to recognize when the speaker is making an important point.

**How do you know when the professor is making an important point?**





# Look for these signs.



- pausing
- giving examples
- repeating what has been said
- repeating the textbook
- increasing volume or changing pitch of voice
- taking more time on one area
- adding class activities or worksheets
- using body language (facial expression, gestures, posture, pace)
- writing on the chalkboard
- using direct statements (this is very important) or signal words (examples: significant, most)

# Ten Ways to Improve Listening

1. Maintain eye contact even if the subject appears boring. There will be some information that will be useful.
2. Judge the content, not delivery. Find out what the speaker knows, not how it is presented.
3. Withhold evaluation until comprehension is complete – don't listen *defensively*.
4. Listen for ideas – main ideas, central facts, organizational patterns.
5. Be flexible in note-taking.



6. Work at listening – spend energy to give conscious attention.
7. Resist distractions – concentrate.
8. Exercise your mind – develop an appreciation for hearing a variety of presentations difficult enough to challenge your mental capacities.
9. Keep your mind open – be careful of emotional impact of certain words.
10. Capitalize on thought speed. Speech speed is about 100 to 200 words per minute. Thought speed can equal as much as 400 words per minute or more.

Because speech speed is about 100 to 200 words per minute, and thought speed can equal as much as 400 words per minute or more, there is a lot of time for your mind to drift...to a far off land.

Learn to recognize when you are drifting off and pull yourself back before you are too far gone.



# Dealing with “Problem Instructors”



He talks too fast or mumbles...

She rambles and goes off on boring tangents...

He explains things in a way that does not make much sense...

# What To Do When You Are in a “Bad Lecture”

- Sit up front where you can hear better and make eye contact.
- Ask questions about the material.
- Ask the professor if he or she could suggest other material to help you better understand the topic.
- Organize your notes while the professor is off topic.
- Form study groups to compare information.

# Ten Questions to Ask Yourself While Listening to a Lecture

1. What is the professor saying; what does it really mean?
2. How does what is being said now relate to what has been said before?
3. Where is the professor going; what's the point the professor is trying to make?
4. How is that helpful; how can I use this?
5. Does this make any sense?

6. Am I getting the whole story?
7. How does this relate to what I already know?
8. Is the professor leaving anything out?
9. Is the professor elaborating on the text?
10. Do I understand what's being said or should I ask for clarification?





# Learning from Lectures

Being an effective listener can help you learn the most out of lectures.

Anticipating important information, engaging the speaker, and being involved with the lecture can help you become a successful student.

# Student Success Centers

For more information on being a successful college student contact the Student Success Center.

119 Payson Smith Hall, Portland  
**780-4040**

119 Bailey Hall, Gorham  
**780-5652**

119 Lewiston-Auburn College, Lewiston  
**753-6500**

or e-mail: [studentsuccess@usm.maine.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@usm.maine.edu)

**Student Success Advisors are available to help you.**