

# Dealing with lectures

Lectures can be daunting at first. The key to dealing with them is to find ways to feel active, rather than passive, and develop ways of listening and note-taking that suit you. The ideas below give you some useful starting points.

## Key points

**Lectures vary** – some are well-structured and clearly delivered, but every lecturer has their own style and you have to adapt.

**Listening skills** – practise listening and thinking more, and writing less.

**Know yourself** – if you're tired, pre-occupied or stressed, it's harder to concentrate. Adapt your listening and note-taking, avoid extra stress.

**Lectures improve with practice** – think about what you do, try new approaches.

## Before a lecture

**Identify purpose of notes:** what are they for? How might you use them?

**Question and engage:** What might the lecture cover? What do I know about this? What would I like to understand at the end of it?

**Plan:** What helped last time? What shall I try today? What is this lecturer's style? Will there be handouts? How shall I take notes?

## During a lecture

**Listen:** identify key areas, spot new topics, repetition, summing up points

**Watch:** body language, emphasis of points, eye contact.

**Keep notes brief:** use symbols, develop your own shorthand, note where to find information later.

**Think:** questioning helps concentration – jot down queries, unclear points

**Pace yourself:** Concentrate at start and finish – spot key points, don't worry about detail.

## After a lecture

**Process:** look back over notes briefly, as soon as you can. Jot down extra points and add queries, or information to follow up

**Follow-up reading:** try to do at least one short extra bit of reading related to the lecture – and ask yourself how it links up to the topic.

**Talking helps:** a quick chat with another student about the lecture can help you understand more than reading over your notes.

**Re-working notes,** making a diagram, re-ordering: this helps understanding.

**File your notes** somewhere helpful and clearly labelled!