

Effective Listening and Notetaking



Effective and Listening and Notetaking

Listening is a skill that should be taught since eighty percent of what you know is learned by listening. This packet contains specific recommendations to help you listen to a lecture more efficiently.

Efficient notetaking is necessary for students to have a record of lectures for future study and review. This packet gives a variety of techniques to improve notetaking skills including mapping.

This information has been adapted from a variety of Study Skills textbooks. The last page of this packet is a bibliography of these textbooks.

Listening Tips

You must learn to listen effectively because eighty percent of what you know is acquired through listening. Listening is a skill that requires the constant application of certain principles until they become habitual. Here are some suggestions:

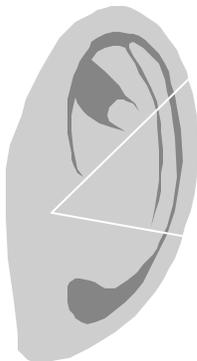
1. Be prepared to listen by keeping up to date with your textbook reading. Read the chapter before the lecture!
2. Determine the main idea and all important details that were given in connection with it.
3. Learn to recognize that the speaker is making an important point by:
 - a. pausing
 - b. giving examples
 - c. repeating what has been said
 - d. repeating the textbook
 - e. increasing volume or changing pitch of voice
 - f. taking more time on one area
 - g. adding class activities or worksheets
 - h. using body language (facial expression, gestures, posture, pace)
 - i. writing on the chalkboard
 - j. using direct statements (this is very important) or signal words (examples: significant, most)

Ten Ways to Improve Listening

1. Find area of interest - 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 he presents it.
3. Withhold evaluation until comprehension is complete – don't become preoccupied with rebuttal before idea is completely presented. Don't listen defensively.
4. Listen for ideas - main ideas, central facts, organizational patterns.
5. Be flexible in notetaking.
6. Work at listening - spend energy to give conscious attention.
7. Resist distractions - a matter of concentration.
8. Exercise your mind - develop an appetite 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 - don't listen defensively composing a rebuttal.
10. Capitalize on thought speed.
Speech speed - 100-200 words per minute
Thought speed - 400-500 or more words per minute.

Take advantage of differential - do not allow distractions during this time.

Ten Questions to Ask Yourself While Listening



1. What is he saying; what does it really mean?
2. How does that relate to what he said before?
3. Where is he going; what's the point he's 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 he leaving anything out?
9. How does this relate to what I already know?

10. Do I understand what he's saying or should I ask for clarification?

Ten BAD Listening Habits, by Ralph G. Nichols

1. Finding the subject uninteresting
2. Judging delivery, not content.
3. Allowing excessive emotional involvement
4. Listening for details, not central ideas
5. Using non-flexible notetaking
6. Paying poor attention to the speaker
7. Being easily distracted
8. Avoiding difficult material
9. Refusing to accept new ideas
10. Thinking about irrelevant topics

How To Take Good Lecture Notes

A good set of lecture notes is one of your most important assets in getting ready for an examination. If you have the facts in readable form, you are well equipped to do the necessary reviewing.

Many students take notes in a very haphazard style claiming that they will copy them later. This is a poor policy for two reasons:

- (1) usually the notes don't get copied and the originals are not much use after a few days or weeks have gone by, and
- (2) if the notes are copied, it is a waste of time because they can just as well be done correctly in the first place.

Three important findings from studies concerned with notetaking:

1. Notetaking helps you listen; it does not interfere with listening and comprehension.
2. Students who study their notes using the recitation method remember one and a half times more after six weeks than students who do not review.

3. Students who take no notes or do not study their notes forget approximately 80% of the lectures by the end of two weeks.

Good lecture notes must:

1. present a neat, attractive appearance.
2. indicate the main points of the lecture.
3. show the relationship of the details to the main points.
4. include enough illustrative detail to enrich notes and content.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TAKING NOTES:

1. **USE INK!** Notes in pencil will smear and are hard to read anyway. Be sure to use a **large** notebook.
2. **Date your notes** for reference in test preparation.
3. **Leave wide margins** and don't crowd your lines together. Notebook paper is cheap - never mind if you use a whole line for just one work. Plenty of white space is important in order to show the relationships of ideas to each other.
4. **Use notetaking shorthand** to reduce as many ideas as possible.
 - a. Reduce to essential words - don't use complete sentences.
 - b. Use symbols as a substitute for words.
 - c. Abbreviate by using initials, half words, creative spelling.
5. **Don't take too many notes.** Do more listening than writing.
6. **Don't try to take down everything the lecturer says.** All lecturers have to repeat a great deal, but you only need to put it down once.
7. **Don't take down the first thing he says on any topic** - it's probably introductory material.
8. **Listen for signals.** He's almost sure to say something about "The first point I want to discuss today..."
9. **Don't try to make a formal outline.** You'll only get bogged down in your letters and numbers and won't be able to concentrate on listening and trying to understand.
10. **Underline the first main topic.** Then write down, in list form but without numbers, the most important things he talks about. (Don't try to make sub-topics and sub-sub-topics.) Keep on doing this until you find that he is talking about something else. Then you will know it's time for another main topic.
11. **Don't bother to number sub-topics unless the lecturer says: "There are three reasons..."** or mentions a specific number of facts. Then number them so you will be sure to learn that many facts when you study for your examination. In other words, don't number just for the sake of numbering, but make the numbers mean something.

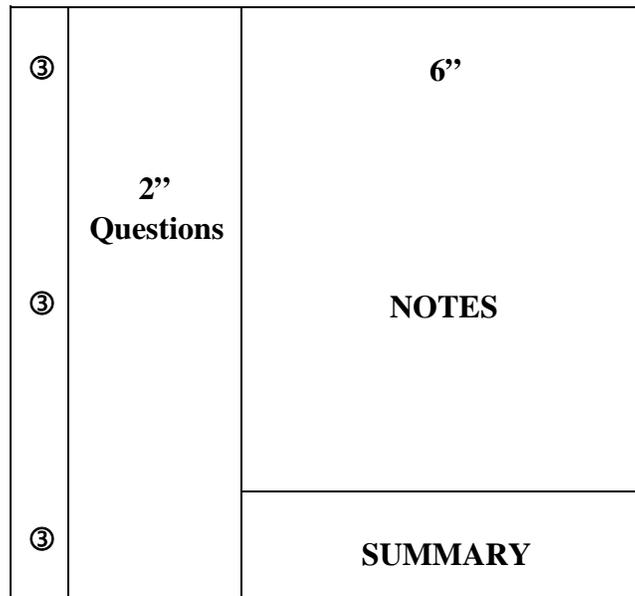
12. **Read your notes over** as soon after class as possible to fix handwriting, spelling and clarity.



HERE IS A SAMPLE NOTETAKING TECHNIQUE:

The 2-6-2 Form of Lecture Notes

1. Use lined notebook paper measuring 8-1/2" x 11" with three holes in the margin.
2. Before writing on your note paper, divide the sheets the following way:



3. Take your notes in the large, open section of the paper just as you would take notes ordinarily.
4. When going over your notes, place key questions in the two-inch margin on the left. These questions will help you in your review of these notes at a later time.
5. Write brief summaries in the section 2 x 6 inches at the bottom of the page. These will help you in your review, when you want to know general ideas, or which topics deserve extra attention (these are the ones which seem vague to you.)

In reviewing notes, use the questions and summaries as “talking” or “starting” points for recitation. Go into the notes themselves only when you feel that you are not prepared to develop the questions and summaries.

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS FOR NOTETAKING

Devise your own abbreviation for words used frequently in a course. Be consistent! Always use the same abbreviation for the same word.

@	at	O	degree	#	number
%	percent		increase		decrease
\$	dollar	yr	year	lb	pound
w/	with	w/o	without	w/i	within
MPH	miles per hour	<	greater than	>	less than
'	feet	“	inches	ch	chapter
ex	example	lr	learn	i.e.	that is
&	and	dept	department	max	maximum
min	minimum	gvt	government	diff	different
lr	learn	q	question	wrt	write
b/4	before	b/c	because	etc	and so on
pg	page	2	two, too to	wrd	word

SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS IN NOTETAKING

- A. **Illegibility** - It is usually sufficient that a student can read his own notes. It is advisable to go over notes while still fresh in order to clarify any illegible parts. This is particularly important in the case of notes that had to be taken rapidly.
- B. **Points Missed** - Leave spaces. Try to fill in later from the text or by checking with classmates or teacher.
- C. **Spelling of a Word Not Known** - Write the word as best as possible phonetically. Code (Sp?) and check later.
- D. **Missed Lectures** - When a classmate must miss a lecture and entrusts you with taking notes for him, use a piece of carbon paper and provide him with his own copy. Thus, there is less chance that he will be using your notes at times when you would like to have them available for review and also less chance of the notes being lost. If you must miss a lecture, your classmates can reciprocate for you.

- E. Ink or Paper Supply Becomes Exhausted** - A replacement might be obtained from a neighbor if it can be done quickly and unobtrusively. Otherwise the student should listen especially carefully and write the missing notes as soon as he possible can. Since forgetting is rapid when notes are not taken, it is wise to check paper, pencil, and ink before leaving for class.
- F. Poor Physical Situation** - When seeing or hearing is difficult, a seat change for the next lecture, or even during the same lecture, is in order. If a problem arises such as light glare preventing students from seeing the place on the board where the lecturer is writing, the lecturer might be informed of this. He would probably rather be interrupted to be informed of such a condition than to have part of his lecture lost.
- G. Poor Physical or Emotional Condition** - Try to concentrate deeply on the topics of the lecture and to become very interested in them. Such practice may help a student forget minor physical discomfort or emotional upset by detracting from it for a while.

MAPPING

Here is an alternative way of notetaking:

Since the brain does not deal with data in a chronological linear fashion, and we do not listen “like someone sucking up spaghetti”, mind map can show relationships and how the parts relate to the whole. Mapping allows you to see the total picture.

STEPS TO FOLLOW:

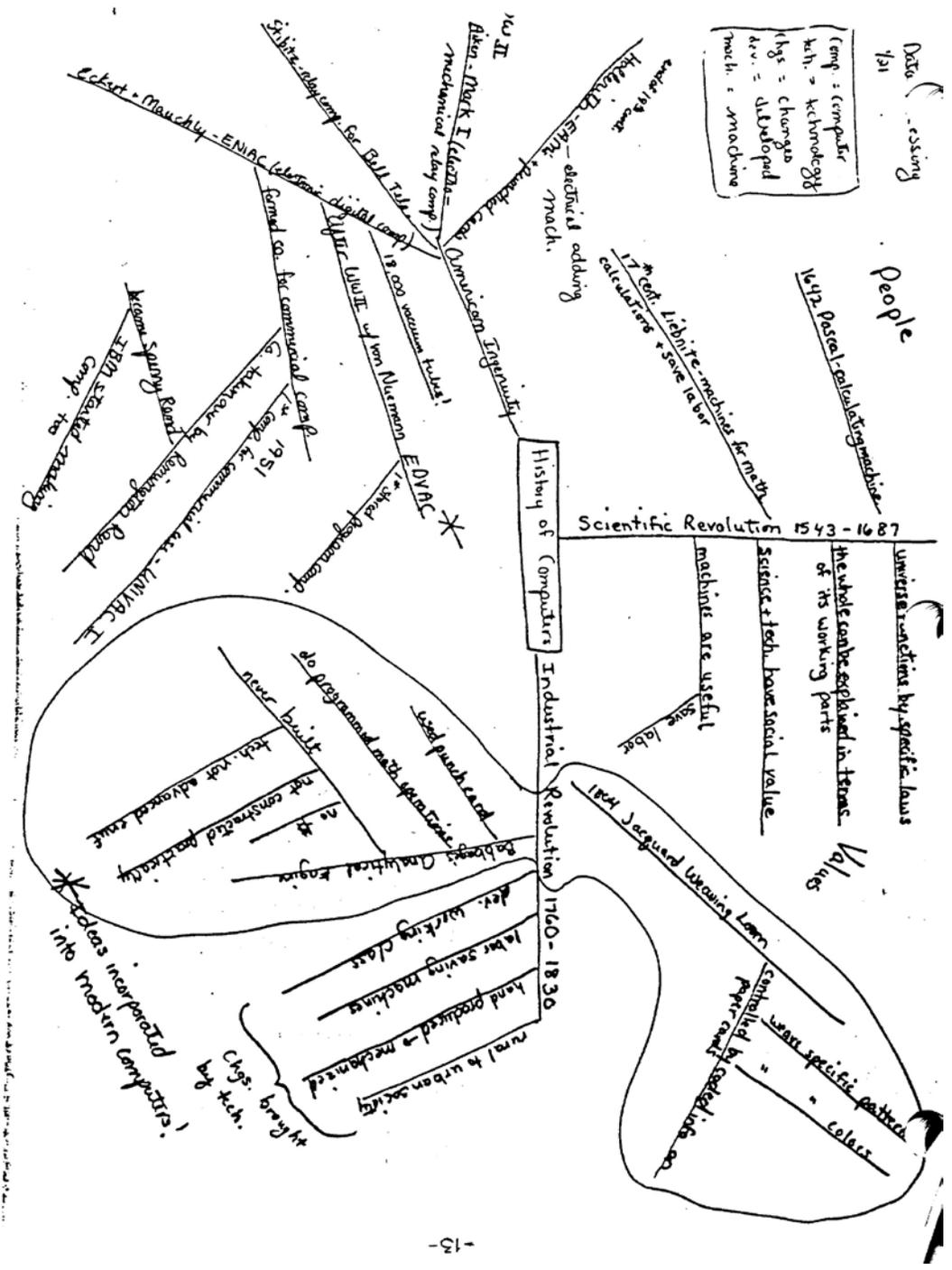
1. You need several sheets of blank paper, standard size.
2. Print the main subject in the middle of the page and draw a geometric shape around it.
3. All ideas plotted on a mind map should be expressed in just one or two key words.
4. Key words should be concrete, meaningful, and summon up the same image or idea each time they are used. Strong nouns or verbs.
5. Think of subtopics that will represent all the data. Print these on lines connecting to the main subject.
6. The supporting points come after subtopics.

ADVANTAGES:

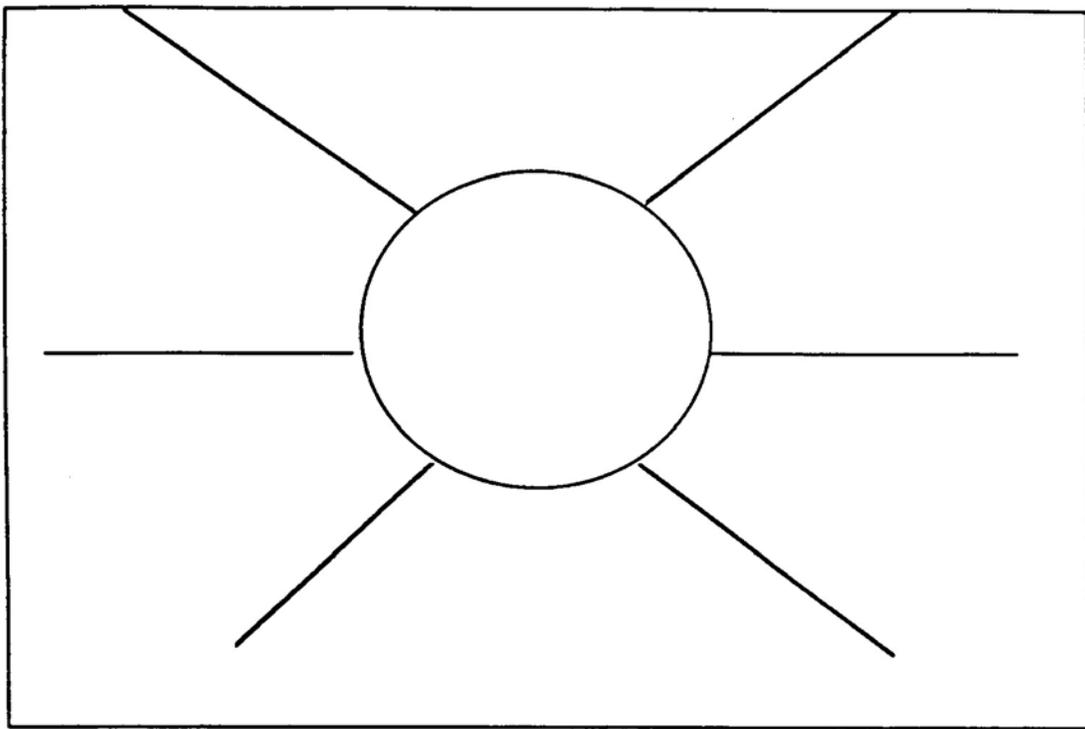
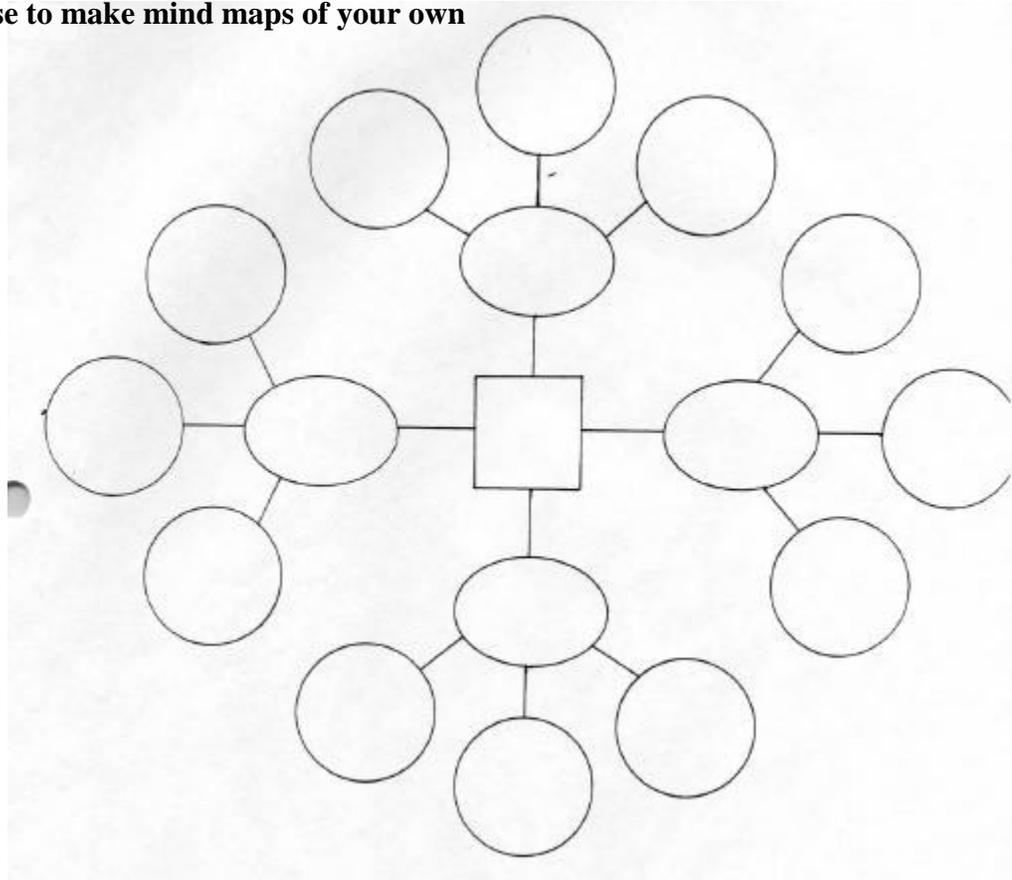
1. The main idea is more clearly defined.
2. The relative importance of each idea is clearly indicated. More important ideas will be nearer the center and less important ideas will be near the edge.

3. The links between the key concepts will be immediately recognizable because of proximity and connection.
4. Recall and review will be more effective and rapid.
5. Structure allows for the easy addition of new information without scratching out or squeezing in.
6. Each map will look different, aiding recall.

Here is a sample mind map:



Use these to make mind maps of your own



HANDWRITING TIPS

Do you have trouble reading your own writing after you have taken notes? Here is an alphabet that may help. Think in straight lines and circles.

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z

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NOTE: *I've been using the North Shore Community College, Danvers MA packet & process of Note-Taking. It covers everything I either suggest, or use in listening & note-taking strategies.*

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