Did you know you can think about four times faster than a lecturer can speak?

That means that in order to learn effectively from lectures, you have to listen and make notes effectively. Learning to make effective notes will help you improve your study and work habits and remember important information. This is an active process; it doesn’t happen automatically. Try these strategies and determine how to best adapt them to each of your courses.

BEFORE CLASS
- Develop a mind-set geared toward listening.
- Test yourself on the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
- Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new terminology, etc.
- Enhance your physical and mental alertness. Eat a nutritious snack before class, sit in the front and/or center of the room, and focus your attention on the speaker.

DURING CLASS
- Date your notes. If you use loose-leaf paper, number your pages.
- Avoid writing down everything you hear. Be alert and attentive to the main points. Concentrate on the “meat” of the subject and forget about the trimmings.
- Resist distractions, emotional reactions, and boredom.
- Notice the professor’s verbal, postural, and visual clues to determine what’s important.
- Your notes should consist of key words and phrases or short sentences. After lectures, it’s necessary to go back and add information. Compare your notes to the textbook.
- In some courses, you may not need detailed descriptions or full explanations. When appropriate, keep your notes concise but accurate. Condense the material so you can grasp key ideas quickly.
- Be consistent in your use of format and abbreviations.
- Ask questions.
- Instead of closing your notebook early and preparing to leave, listen carefully to information given toward the end of class. Summary statements may be of particular value to highlight main points. There may be possible quiz questions or suggestions for studying.

AFTER CLASS
- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking the professor or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Shortly after taking a set of notes, review and rework your notes by adding in information and clarifying unclear items.
- Keep notes in order and in one place. Making notes on different sized loose sheets of paper can result in unorganized, hard-to-follow notes.

PERIODICALLY
- Review your notes. Glance at your recall clues and see how much you can remember before rereading.
- Look for the emergence of themes, main concepts, methods of presentation over the course of several lectures.
- Make up and answer possible test questions.

Adapted from www.utexas.edu