ACTIVE LISTENING AND NOTE TAKING

Active listening involves processes and strategies similar to effective reading: predicting, associating, and using contextual cues. A lecture, like a test, can be better understood by asking questions such as those below. Developing the habit of asking questions helps you to listen more effectively and to take better notes.

1. PREDICTING: Formulating and following the ‘big picture’ by trying to predict
   - What’s next
   - What major point will be elaborated on
   - The sequence of the lecture

2. ASSOCIATING: Connecting different pieces of related information
   - What has already been said, and how does it fit with new information?
   - Which details support which main ideas?
   - How does lecture material relate to the textbook and other readings?
   - How does the lecture material relate to other course information/ideas?
   - What does the lecture indicate about how do the syllabus topics relate to each other?

3. FINDING CUES
   Listen for words and phrases that signify importance
   - “A vital point is…”
   - “An important concept…”
   - “The significance of…”

   Look for numbered/unnumbered series:
   - “The steps are…”
   - “Five causes are…”
   - “There are several reasons…”

   Listen for concluding/synthesizing phrases
   - “Finally…”
   - “In conclusion…”
   - “In summary…”

4. GETTING BACK ON TRACK
   If you find yourself mentally wandering, try asking some focusing questions
   - What was the last statement made?
   - What are the main points recently mentioned?
   - How does the current statement fit in with previous comments?
   Try to think of your own focusing questions.

5. FOLLOW UP
   Shortly after lectures, ask yourself
   - Are my notes legible?
   - Do they make sense?
   - Are there any gaps that can be filled by course reading?
   - Do I have any questions for the instructor?

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RWSSC, GWC, E. O'Brien, R. Katz, K. Hill