

Note-Taking Tips for Lectures, Discussion

1. Listen for Aural Cues

a. Words that *convey emphasis*

- “especially”
“The last chapter especially should be read very carefully.”
- “crucial”
“Knowing how to do field research is crucial to being a good ag student.”
- “Most important of all,..”
“Most important of all, you will need to provide a sharp, functional, yet pleasant visual design for your report.”
- “Remember that...”
- “Do not forget...”

b. Listen for *transitions*:

- “First of all....secondly,..... thirdly.....”
- “To sum up...”
- “Finally,...”
- “In other words,...”
- “On the other hand,...”

c. Listen for words spoken *louder*.

d. Listen for *pauses* which may suggest

- an important transitional moment
- the beginning of a summary

- a lull when the speaker implicitly expects you to be absorbing something important that was just said, or to be writing down whatever was just said.

e. Listen for *direct orders*: “Be sure to do XYZ by Friday”

2. Look for Visual Cues

- a. The speaker circles a sentence on a blackboard multiple times.
- b. The speaker presents a document with certain words in all-caps.
- c. Body language indicating emphasis, exasperation, approval.
- d. The speaker presents a Power Point that includes some slides with exclamation points, attention-getting color, or other forms of emphasis.

3. Try to Take An Appropriate Quantity of Notes

- a. Don't write so much or so feverishly that you miss important comments or fail to absorb what is said.
- b. Be aware of whether or not a recording and/or other documents will be available outside of class, so that you can reduce the amount of note-taking. *Ask the speaker* in advance if the lecture will be available later.
- c. Even if documents are available and everything will be on video, the act of writing is mnemonic. The actual physical act helps with recall. Even if you throw away or lose your notes, having written them will assist in remembering info.
- d. Try to save a little time after the event to write down additional info while your memory is fresh. You can

clarify points, add questions, mark your notes with visual cues for items of primary importance.