

Taking down notes during lecture time is not an easy task especially when you have been accustomed to being given notes by teachers at secondary school level. Now that you have reached this point in your academic career, you are expected to be in a position to take down notes and write down your own notes from where you should study.

The importance in jotting notes during lecture time stems from the fact that these are being done by yourself in a manner which you are able to understand. Copying or getting notes from other sources even those given by lecturers could result in you failing to understand what is written down. It might not be written down in a manner which you are able to comprehend. Even if the lecturer gives notes it doesn't imply that staring or doing something else during the lecture is justifiable. Skiving lectures or arriving late because you have got notes from other sources is just not on.

Problems with notes from third parties

In recent years, student organisations have taken the initiative to act as middle man for students and disseminate notes written down by other students or taken from lecturers (without their knowledge, i.e. illegally and in breach of copy write law). As lecturers we know that some of the material being disseminated contains incorrect information which ends up as answers in exam papers! Such practices, apart from being illegal should be discouraged since it is the recipient students who are ending up with incorrect information thanks to such irresponsible initiatives. Eventually, it is the recipient students who are not getting any marks by writing down incorrect answers. The help being dished out is to get lower marks in their exams thanks to the mistakes found in the notes being disseminated!

Whenever one obtains notes from third parties one should read them, cross check with other sources and write down his/her own notes. Where in doubt, one should also consult with the respective lecturer/s. Whereas such cases where one needs to obtain notes due to absence should not be the norm, one must understand that one could ask for a contact hour with the respective lecturer in order to cover the missed lecture and address any difficulties.

Writing down notes

During the two year course, most of the material covered would be new to you and hence it is of utmost importance that you pay attention in class or online and refrain from fidgeting with mobiles and other distractive items which might be available.

Your primary role is that you should be punctual for the lecture.

Secondly, find a suitable place in class where you could concentrate and follow the lecture. Avoid people who could distract you during the lecture: your role is to follow and understand what is being said not what others are doing. You are at the receiving end.

If the lecturer has instructed you to download or photocopy some material for the lecture, make sure that you get it with you to the lecture; ideally, you would have gone over the

material prior to the lecture. This will help you better understand what is being said and you could clarify some points which you might not have understood. If you fail to understand something during the lecture time, raise your hand and ask questions. Lecturers are there to answer your queries. If you are shy to raise your hand and ask, then either ask the lecturer at the end of the lecture or take note and ask for a contact hour and the lecturer will be happy to explain.

During lecture time, make sure that you have any information sheet available and also a blank sheet of paper where you could jot down notes which might not be found on the information sheet or notes given. Ideally write down short notes which could be amplified later. Make sure to write down notes which are being emphasized by the lecturer. These could include references which could be looked at later, keywords written on the board etc.

Once the lecture is over, you need to take stock of the whole lecture. How? Go to the library, study area or some other quiet place and go over all the notes you have written down and rewrite them in a manner which you are able to understand in the coming months. You could also use text books to supplement your notes or search the web for additional material. Once done, then these are YOUR notes, the ones which you are able to understand! When you have reached this point you can say that you have achieved a lot. You will find it easier to study when you get to your test or examinations time.

One could argue that in order to do all this work you need a lot of time. Sure but you have a lot of free time where you can do all this work. You have a lot of free time between lectures and you should use that time in a diligent manner, rather than wasting your time hanging around doing nothing or chatting. That is the difficult part. Studying is not just about passing exams but about understanding the concepts which you are being presented with and being able to explain them and use them accordingly. Rote learning, which is studying by heart without understanding what you are studying, is neither productive nor conducive to furthering your education. You will encounter greater difficulties further on in your life. So it is better to start now and adapt to your life in educational institutions.

You have reached this point in your life and you have the potential to get more so make sure that you develop to your full potential and aim to get a good grade not just scrape through with difficulty. When you aim to scrape through, if you fail you will not get any grade except that of a failure. The choice is yours.