Falling asleep in lectures? Can’t see the point? Need to get more out of your lectures?

Understanding how lectures work, and then making them work for you, can make your life as a student so much better.

Among other things, lectures are designed to give you (separately or in combination):

- A sense of the excitement of a topic or area of study
- a basis for discussion in tutes
- a context for further individual study
- a snapshot of some of the connections between central concepts
- an explanation of complex material
- access to knowledge that is hard to find in published material
- customised material for your particular area
- insights gained through years of research
- an overview of a large topic

Disadvantages of lectures

→ Lectures, in general, are experienced passively by students who sit still for long periods with little opportunity to contribute

→ Impersonal learning environment

→ Many potential distractions (including boredom)

You can make the most of your lectures, and ameliorate the disadvantages, through the use of the strategies offered overleaf.
How can I get more out of lectures?

Even though you are required to sit still and listen for long stretches, try to approach your lectures as active learning situations. That is, try to:

- arrive on time so you don’t miss outlines and other introductory material
- sit up straight and near the front. Sitting at the back allows you to feel like a spectator rather than a participant. It is often easier to let your mind wander when sitting at the back.

Listen actively. That is,

- take notes to keep you focused
- draw mind maps of the concepts covered and the relationships between them
- use your critical thinking skills. This means that you should ask questions as the lecture progresses (write these in a separate column of your notes and then review later or ask in them in tutes)
- predict what is coming next (this is easier if you have done the required reading).

Think...

- of examples relevant to you
- about how the material relates to the reading you have done (you can see why it is important to have done the reading)
- about how the lecture relates to the unit as a whole.

Tips!

- Watch out for the dangerous 20-25 minute mark when many students, despite best intentions, begin to find it hard to stay focused.
- Keep in mind that the goal is for you to understand the material offered.
- Summarise the main points using your own words. This helps you to understand the material. You can do this either during or after the lecture.

Other useful resources:

Other Survival guides – “Note-taking and Lectures” “Critical thinking”

LL&RS Workshops: see website at www.studentsservices.uwa.edu.au/learning


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