



University
of Exeter

Getting the most out of a lecture

At university your teaching will be made up of a combination of lectures, seminars and practical work, depending on your subject. However, what do these styles of learning actually look like? Here, we will be focusing on how to get the most of a lecture to prepare you for university-style learning.

Lectures are where the main topics of your course will be introduced. They're typically delivered to a large group of students in a lecture theatre setting, giving you the opportunity to listen and take notes.

It's important to make the most of your lectures, as they provide valuable information on key areas of your course. We've outlined some tips to help you think about what you can be doing before, during and after a lecture.

Before the lecture

How prepared are you? Preparation can help you feel engaged in the topic and make it easier to follow the content. You can achieve this by seeing if your lecture slides are available before the lecture and looking through them so you know what to expect. It is also helpful to look back over previous lectures, doing this will help you start to question how new information fits in with what you have already learnt about the subject area.

During the lecture

Note-taking is an effective way to record and retain information learnt during lectures. There are different ways in which you can take notes so you need to find which way works best for you.



After the lecture

It is easy to think your work is done after the lecture, however, it's important to review your notes. Reviewing your notes will improve your understanding of the topic and allow you to edit and amend information to help identify any gaps in your knowledge. It could be helpful to imagine trying to explain this lecture to someone else to identify parts you would struggle with. You can then follow up on these areas by undertaking further research.

Tips for reviewing notes: www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/learning/exam-prep/reviewing-after-lecture

TRANSITION TIPS



Often, lecturers will send out the PowerPoint slides ahead of the lecture, which is a great opportunity to either make notes to bring to the lecture, or at least read through the slides. This will allow you to actually absorb what the lecturer is saying, and you can annotate your notes with any additional information that you learn in class.

Lara, North London, Business and Management with Industrial Placement.



Firstly, decide how you will take notes during lectures- some people prefer a notebook, while for others a laptop or tablet is easier, you might experiment with both. Next, be prepared to only note down key points, as you won't have time to write down everything a lecturer says. Remember that you can always re-watch lectures – they are recorded and posted on the Exeter University online platform (ELE) if you need to recap.

Tamara, Worcestershire,
English Literature and French.



1. Be prepared

- Read/download lecture slides or notes
- Do any required reading ahead of the lecture

2. Keep notes brief

- Use key words to summarise main points
- Consider recording audio
- Try different techniques inc. mind maps
- Use abbreviations and symbols

3. Review

- Read over notes to check they make sense
- Fill in any gaps – by extra reading, looking online, talking to peers
- Label key sections

4. Organise

- Link related slides, notes and recordings together
- You will need your notes to revise for exams and/or for developing essays to make sure you keep them somewhere you can find them easily



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