

Comprehending Lectures

Studies have shown that within 24 hours most students have forgotten more than 60% of the information from a lecture. Adequate notes are a necessary tool for efficient study and learning in seminary. Think over the following suggestions and improve your note-taking system where needed.

- Listen actively and think before you write. Keep up with the lecture and don't get behind.
- Be open-minded even if you don't agree with the professor. Don't let your disagreement get in the way of taking notes.
- Ask questions if you don't understand a point or want the professor to clarify a position. "Was Reuther trying to say . . .?" You need to decide if it is appropriate to interrupt the lecture for your question or if you should wait until class is over.
- Leave some space on the page where you are taking notes. You can fill in missed points later.
- Never write down every word. Spend your time listening and trying to comprehend so that you can just note the main points. If you spend too much time writing, you might miss the next point of the lecture.
- Listen for cues in the lecture: such as "there are three main divisions in Augustinian theology" or "the next point in Tillich's theology is . . ."
- Try to discern the main points of the lecture and don't get caught up in time spent expounding on the main point.
- Make sure you can read your own handwriting and your "shorthand."
- Record anything the professor takes the time and effort to write on the board.
- Sit in the front of the room. That way you won't be tempted to look out the window at all of our beautiful trees. It also makes you stay awake. Of course, we are not suggesting that would ever be a problem!
- Ask if you are not sure of the assignment. Often professors give verbal assignments so you must write them down to make sure that you understand what they want. Don't rely on your memory.

- You should also consider dividing the page that you are taking notes on into two sections. Use one section for your thoughts about a lecture and one section for notes from the lecture. This way, you won't be confused or have to try to remember what a professor actually said and what you thought about what was being said.