

How to succeed@attending lectures

Have you every walked out of a lecture and thought 'what did I learn in there?' Here's how you can remember: this leaflet is designed to give you tips and strategies that can help you get the most out of the lectures that you attend.

Remember that you can get lots more study tips and resources from succeed@solent on myCourse.

What are lectures for?

Lectures are the foundation on which your programme of study is based. They:

- introduce you to new topics
- explain complex ideas
- provide a framework on which you can build

The audience is generally expected to be attentive and there are usually very limited opportunities for interaction. Therefore, if you have a question you would like to ask:

1. Write it down so you don't forget it.
2. Ask your tutor later.

Lectures are also used to focus and guide your reading into areas that you should study in depth for assessment purposes. However, not all of your reading should be done after the lecture.

What should I read in advance?

- You can ask your tutors.
- Look at your Reading List.

A little **background reading before a lecture** will help you assimilate new information into your existing knowledge base more easily. It will introduce you to the vocabulary of the subject so you are not bombarded with a host of new terms all at once. This will allow you to concentrate on the meaning of what is being said rather than on the words being used.



Also, be sure to look in your course documentation:

- It will set out your lecture programme.
- It will also set out the learning outcomes for your unit so you will have a good idea about the general area of discussion.

How do I interpret the lecture?

Lectures can take many forms and may include the use of a wide range of supporting material such as: handouts, slides, PowerPoint presentations and even role-play. The one thing that all lectures do have in common is that they are intended to transmit information.

When analysed, this information can be assigned to one of three categories:

Facts	All lectures contain factual material given verbally or visually.
Concepts	Most lectures contain an element of conceptual integration of the material. This is usually the most important part of the lecture. Many lecturers concentrate on concepts, on the premise that you can obtain the facts from books.
References	Sources of further relevant material may also be given. These references substantiate the points addressed in the lecture.

Many lecturers use anecdotal examples to illustrate a point. It is essential that you look beyond such descriptions and extract the underlying information.

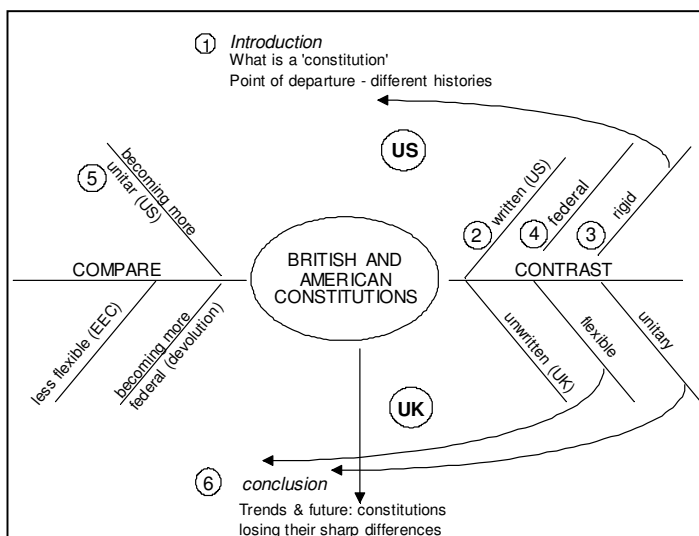
Record essential information

Don't rely on handouts - there may not be any! Even if there are, they will be set out in a way that was meaningful to the person who wrote them - it doesn't always follow that they will be meaningful to you. Good notes can help you recall the context as well as the contents of the lecture. Taking notes will help you maintain concentration throughout the lecture as you actively seek to identify the key points.

Factors that influence the effectiveness of note-taking vary with each student, but may include: the lecture topic, the nature of hand-outs (if given), the nature of any visual material presented, the design of the lecture theatre, and the style of the lecturer.

Noting both facts and references is straightforward - they can be written down as they are presented, often in the same form. However, concepts require rather more; they require a degree of *analysis* and *interpretation* of the material, which can sometimes be difficult to describe simply in narrative form, especially if there are complex relationships involved.

Tony Buzan, in his book *Use Your Head* (BBC Publications, London, 1974) puts forward a model of note taking that is *diagrammatic* rather than textual. It is often called "mind-mapping" (for more info, see 'How to succeed@taking notes').



Be selective

Try to draw a balance between writing and listening; the more you write the less you listen. Try to identify/record the main points and fill in the detail as soon as possible after the lecture. Remember that lecturers use OHPs as much for their benefit as yours; only record what you need.

You might occasionally find it useful to record a lecture and write it up later. You will obviously need to sit where you can see and hear clearly. You should always ask permission to record the lecture; it is unlikely that any lecturer will refuse but it is a simple courtesy to ask.

After the lecture

You need to do **something** with your notes as soon after the lecture as possible. This will help you retain the information.

- Write up your notes as soon as possible, filling in any gaps or expanding on the ideas presented. This is *Note-making* as opposed to *Note-taking*. Don't be afraid to add your own comments. Knowledge is about understanding not just learning facts.
- Discuss the lecture with other students to see if you all agree on the main points. If there is general consensus you are probably OK. If there is some disagreement then seek clarification.
- Check **reference details** and cross-reference your notes to your course work and assignment research. You will need to develop an effective and reliable filing system as soon as possible so that you can easily retrieve the information you have just carefully written up.

Further help

In succeed@solent you will find the following to help you with your lectures and revision:

[How to succeed@taking notes](#)
[How to succeed@referencing](#)
[How to succeed@revising](#)

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Email: succeed@solent.ac.uk

Web: mycourse.solent.ac.uk/succeed