

How to Make the Most of Lectures

It is 9 a.m. You did not have time to get coffee, and the lecturer, barely visible behind the lectern, is speaking at breakneck speed about things you cannot follow. Was getting up so early a waste of time?

Do not give up! Attending lectures is one of the best ways to gain the knowledge and skills you need, and it can be one of the most enjoyable parts of university life. Really!

If you stop attending, you risk falling behind. Lectures become harder to follow, and catching up alone starts to feel overwhelming. This cycle can undermine your confidence. Besides, you might miss the chance to meet your best friends in the seats next to you.

The good news: a few simple habits can help you adjust quickly and make lectures useful and enjoyable.

1. Arrive on time. Joining halfway through makes it much harder to understand the topic and follow the discussion.
2. Do not sit right at the back. Since you have made the effort to get up, give yourself a chance to hear, see, and participate.
3. If you can, spend five or ten minutes previewing the topic: glance at the available slides or the introduction and key concepts of the chapter.* You are not expected to learn it in advance. A little familiarity can make the lecture easier to follow.
4. Try to stay focused. This is not the time for chatting (or playing Tichu). If your attention drifts or you miss one point, do not worry: pick up the main argument again and return to the gap later.
5. Take notes. They help you pay attention, focus on what matters, and study later. See “How to Take Notes.”
6. Notice what the lecturer emphasizes and pay attention to examples: they help you understand and remember key concepts.
7. Join the discussion and ask questions. Do not be embarrassed to raise your hand. If someone laughs at your question or answer, that is their problem, not yours.
8. If you do not understand something, ask the lecturer after class, discuss it with classmates, ask during the tutorial, or post a question in the eClass Discussions.
9. Return to your lecture notes when preparing for the tutorial. Try to explain the main ideas without looking, then check what you missed and note any questions. A short review is enough to make a start.

* Check the current course timetable and materials on eClass for the chapter covered in each lecture.