TIPS FOR LISTENING TO LECTURES

Your academic success here at UNCA is contingent on a variety of factors, such as your ability to take thorough notes, study effectively, and prepare for exams. All of these factors share an essential common denominator - listening. After all, in order to get the most out of your class lectures, take good notes, and be prepared for upcoming exams, you need to acquire solid listening skills. In doing so, you will be able to take information in, process it, and add it to your repertoire of knowledge. Below are some tips to help you improve your listening skills.

- **Listening is an active - not passive - process.** It is important to distinguish the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is a sense that is the first step towards listening. On the other hand, listening is an active communicative process in which you evaluate the message you hear and then respond once the speaker has finished talking. As such, an active listener works while the speaker is talking.

- **Attitude is everything - stay motivated.** Granted, it is not easy to be alert and motivated for a Calculus lecture at 8 am. In moments when you are tempted to allow your mind to wander, change your position in your seat and recommit yourself to trying to focus by asking yourself, “How is this information useful to me?”

- **Effective Listening requires a great deal of concentration.** While you are listening to a lecture, you need to evaluate the message you’re receiving, determine the main points the instructor is trying to make, and think of how the new material you are learning about relates to information you already know.

- **Listen to get the main ideas.** Keep in mind that the intention behind listening to a lecture is to gain better insight and knowledge of the topic. Instead of trying to remember every word spoken, your goal is to have an overall understanding of the material covered.

- **Pay close attention to how your instructor presents his/her lectures.** Within the first few minutes of a lecture, an instructor usually reveals the purpose behind the lecture, along with what you should gain from listening to it. By recognizing this at the beginning of every lecture, you will get into the right mindset for learning and have a solid idea about what you will need to focus on in your notes.

- **Ask Questions.** To make sure you understand what you are listening to, ask questions whenever you do not understand or need clarification. If you are not able to ask a question during a lecture, jot down your question and approach your instructor after the lecture is over to discuss it.
By practicing effective listening skills, you will be able to notice phrases within a lecture that serve to transition from one point to another or emphasize particular points. Recognizing these particular words and/or phrases will help you identify important moments within a lecture. Below are a few examples of commonly used transitions.

**Introduction**
“Today’s lecture covers…”
“Today I’d like to discuss…”
“Let’s look at…”

**Sequence or Enumeration**
“First, secondly, thirdly”
“Next, then, finally”
“In addition to, Lastly”

**Comparisons and Contrasts**
“Similarly, Both, Likewise”
“However, Instead of, Nevertheless”
“Although, On the other hand, Despite”

**Cause and Effect**
“Because of this, For this reason, The cause of”
“As a result, Therefore, Thus”

**To Relate A New Concept with a Learned Concept**
“If you remember…”
“You already know…”
“This relates back to…”

**Summarize**
“So, In short, In conclusion”
“Just to review, To sum up”

*Be alert for nonverbal cues.* Although we associate listening with our ears, our eyes also play an important role in this activity since they detect nonverbal communication. Therefore, pay attention to the nonverbal cues your instructor provides throughout the course of a lecture; they highlight important aspects of a presentation. Examples of nonverbal cues include tone of voice, the use of extended pauses to emphasize a point, facial expressions, and gestures.

References


