

SHARPEN YOUR NOTE -TAKING SKILLS



Mayland Community College
SOAR Program
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Note-taking is a three part process of OBSERVING, RECORDING, AND REVIEWING. First you observe an event (teacher lecturing or a film), then you record

your observations of the event (taking notes). Finally, you review what you have recorded. The following are helpful hints to effective note-taking.

OBSERVING:

1. **COMPLETE OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS**: Instructors assume students have completed their assignments before class. The more familiar you are with the subject, the better you can observe and follow what happens in class.
2. **BRING THE RIGHT MATERIALS**: Make sure you have your pen, pencil, notebook, books, and any other materials you will need.
3. **SIT FRONT AND CENTER**: Studies show that students who sit front and center do better on tests. Material on the board is easier to read. The closer you are to the instructor, the less likely you are to fall asleep or get distracted.
4. **CONDUCT A SHORT PRE-CLASS REVIEW**: Arrive early to class. Review your notes or scan your reading assignment. Review assigned problems, exercises, or other homework. Note questions to ask. Give yourself about 10 minutes before class for your “warm up”.
5. **PAY ATTENTION**: You will daydream, but catch yourself and bring yourself back to the class. This way you will increase your ability to stay on task. Imagine the lecture is a personal talk with you. Look the instructor in the eye for better concentration.
6. **LET GO OF JUDGMENTS ABOUT LECTURE STYLES**: Instructors are human and have idiosyncrasies like everyone else. They may repeat themselves, comb their hair funny, or talk too loud. Don’t allow your judgment to interfere with your education.
7. **PARTICIPATE IN CLASS ACTIVITIES**: Ask questions, volunteer answers, and join class discussions.
8. **WATCH FOR CLUES**:
 - Be alert to repetition. When an instructor repeats a phrase or idea, it is a signal that he/she thinks the information is important enough to be repeated.
 - Listen for introductory, concluding, and transition words and phrases like “the following three factors,” “the most important,” “on the other hand,” etc. They reveal the structure of the lecture.
 - Watch the board. Copy all diagrams, drawings, names, places, dates, statistics, definitions, etc. from the board. If the instructor takes the time to write it down, consider it important enough to write down and review.
 - Listen for obvious clues. Instructors often tell students that certain information will be on the exam.
 - Notice the instructor’s interest level. Pay attention if he/she appears excited or animated about lecture material. It will likely be on the exam.

RECORDING:

1. **LABEL AND DATE ALL NOTES.**
2. **USE ONLY ONE SIDE OF THE PAPER.** This allows you to review and organize all your notes by spreading them out side by side.
3. **USE A THREE RING BINDER.** You can make additions, corrections, and revisions easier. You can also add insert handouts in the chronological or correct order.
4. **USE STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS.** Be consistent with your abbreviations. If you make up your own, be sure to have a key somewhere. (see list of abbreviations)
5. **USE GRAPHIC SYMBOLS.** = + & % \$ # @ < > () /
6. **USE COMPLETE SENTENCES WHEN MATERIAL IS IMPORTANT.**
Sometimes key words are not enough. When an instructor repeats a sentence using the exact same words, write it exactly. Technical definitions are often worded precisely and a slightly different word could change the meaning.
7. **USE WHITE SPACE.** Tightly crammed notes are hard to read and difficult to review. Advertisers use “white space” to make advertisements easier to read.
8. **USE KEY WORDS.** Key words or phrases helps to sort out the “extras” and highlight the important points. Key words are laden with associations and can trigger your memory/associations.

REVIEWING:

1. **Review within 24 hours.** Short term memory decays fast. A quick review can save that information. The sooner you review your notes, the better. 24 hours after learning, most students are unable to recall 20% of the content unless they reviewed material.
2. **Edit notes.** Make sure you can read everything in your notes.
3. **Fill in key words for Cornell Method.** This helps speed review.
4. **Conduct reviews** at least weekly.
5. **Conduct pre-class reviews,** returning to the first step.

EXERCISE: NOTE-TAKING FORMATS

Three types of Note-taking are the Cornell format, the Mindmap format, and the standard organized outline format. You should choose the format that feels most comfortable and will allow you to record the subject matter best.

Read the following article, then review the different note-taking formats that have been used for this lecture.

LECTURE ON LIE DETECTORS

There are many misunderstandings about so-called lie detecting equipment, especially the polygraph.

The word polygraph simply means “multiple writer.” It is a machine that is designed to record several types of information at the same time. The information is about the physiological state of persons to whom the polygraph is connected: blood pressure, breathing, perspiration, and other body functions.

The use of a polygraph to “detect lies” stems from the fact that when people tell lies, they usually have an emotional response that brings about a change in their physiological state. A polygraph cannot tell the difference between a lie and a truthful statement. It merely records the fact that a person’s physiological condition indicates that an emotional response occurred at a given time.

Suspects cannot be forced to have polygraph tests. If they agree to undergo polygraph examinations, a trained, highly qualified polygraph operator must be used. It is the examiner’s interpretation of polygraph records that is important. Since the records from the machine do not state that a person has lied, a qualified examiner must interpret the records.

Recently, the voice stress analyzer has been developed for use as a “lie detector.” Its inventors claim that it detects lies (or emotional responses) by detecting variations in person’s voices that are caused by stress. This machine has advantages over the polygraph. It is a more compact device than the polygraph and it does not need to be connected directly to a person. Also, the manufacturers claim that the voice stress analyzer may be used to detect lies in tape recordings of voices. If these claims are found to be true, the voice stress analyzer may become widely used very soon.

STANDARD ORGANIZED OUTLINE FORMAT

Title

I. First Main Point

A. First Sub-point

- 1 Fact
 - a. Detail
 - b. Detail
2. Fact
 - a. Detail
 - b. Detail

B. Second Sub-point

1. Fact
2. Fact
 - a. Detail
 - b. Detail

II. Second Main Point

Continue in the same manner with differing numbers of sub-points, facts and details as seen necessary. Then summarize your notes.

SUMMARY: -----

OR

SUMMARY QUESTION: Formulation of a question and/or questions incorporating the main ideas of the lecture.

OUTLINE FORMAT/CORNELL METHOD

LIE DETECTORS

Date

- | | |
|--|---|
| | 1. What is a Polygraph? (Definition of polygraph) |
|--|---|

2. What kinds of information does the polygraph record?
(Kinds of information recorded by the polygraph)
3. What is the polygraph used for?
(Use of polygraph)
4. What are the reasons for the use of a polygraph as a lie detector?
(Reasons for use of a polygraph as lie detector)
5. Who interprets the reading and why is the interpretation important?
(Interpretation of reading and its importance)
6. What is the purpose of the voice stress analyzer?
(Purpose of voice stress analyzer)
7. What are the advantages of the voice stress analyzer?
(Advantages over the polygraph)
8. What is the voice stress analyzer used for?
(Use of voice stress analyzer)

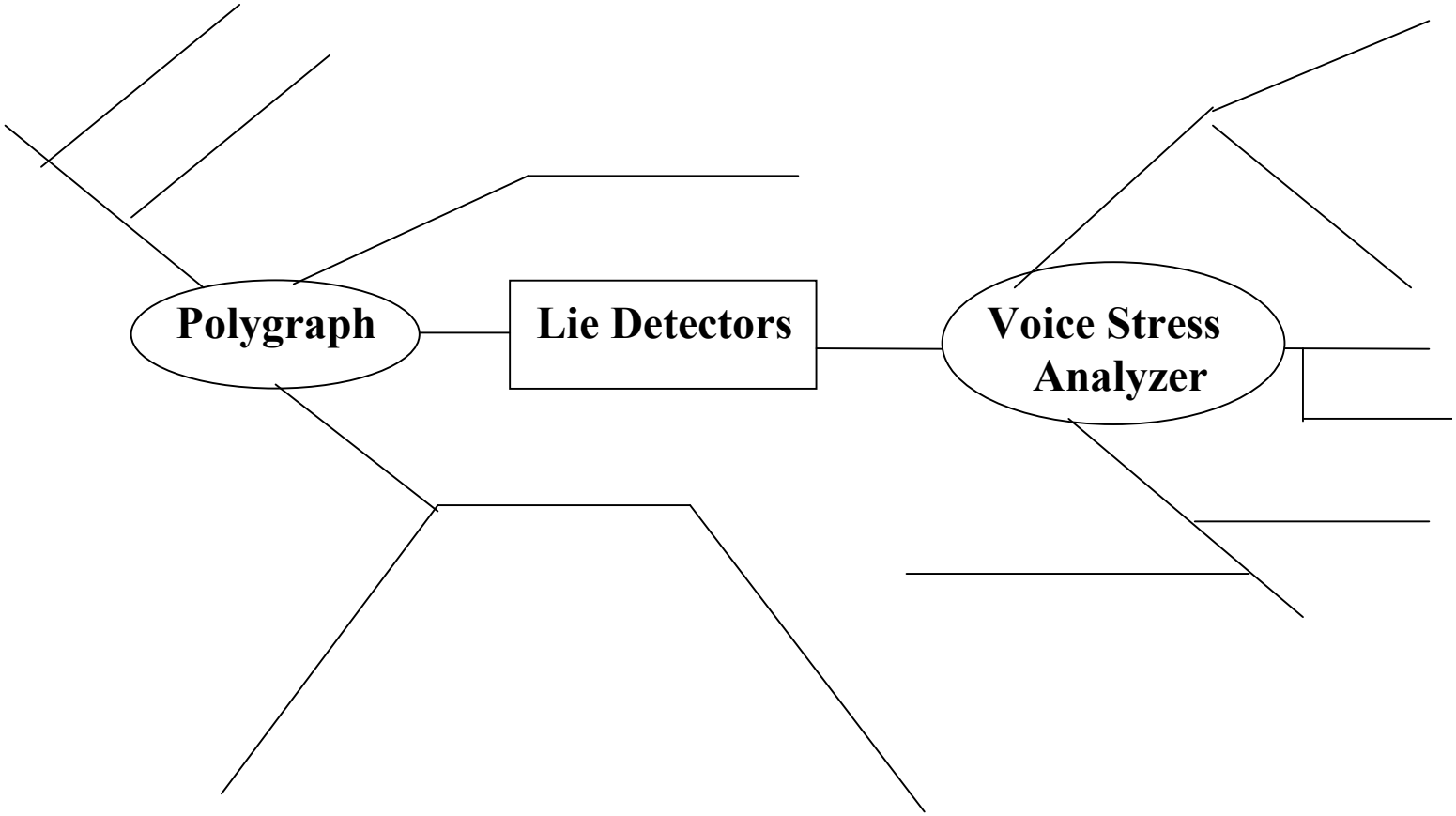
POLYGRAPH

1. **Definition** - multiple writer
2. **Information recorded**
 - Several types of information at the same time regarding physiological state
 - Blood pressure
 - Breathing
 - Perspiration
3. **Use** - Detects lies
4. **Reasons for use**
 - Lies-->emotional response--> change in physiological state
 - Can't tell difference between physiological and truthful statements
 - Records fact that person's physiological condition indicated that emotional response occurred at a given time
5. **Interpretation**
 - Trained, highly qualified polygraph operator must be used
 - Important: records do not state that person has lied; determined through interpretation

VOICE STRESS ANALYZER

1. **Purpose** - detects lies or emotional responses by variations in voices caused by stress
2. **Advantages over the polygraph**
 - More compact
 - Does not need to be connected directly to person
3. **Use** - detects lies in tape recorded voices

MINDMAPPING METHOD



LISTENING/NOTE-TAKING

Good Note-taking requires effective listening which involves concentrating on, selecting, summarizing and finally evaluating what is being said by the lecturer. The key to effective listening is to be an ACTIVE listener.

ARE YOU AN ACTIVE LISTENER?

- Are you prepared to listen?
- Do you continually evaluate the material?
- Do you listen with a questioning attitude?
- Do you react to the material?

HOW WELL DO YOU LISTEN?

- Are you easily distracted?
- Do you ignore nonverbal messages?
- Do you tune out if you feel that the speaker has nothing interesting to say?

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

1. Become acquainted with your lecturer's mannerisms and general method of lecturing -- style, tone, inflection of voice, pauses, accentuation of words, non-verbal gestures, organization of information, etc.
2. Try not to be affected or distracted by the lecturer's mannerisms.
3. Look for signals or cues from the lecturer for the identification of important ideas. He/she may pause, repeat, raise his/her voice, or use transitional clues or summarizing cues such as: therefore, thus; the relationship between, the main point is, the main idea is, in general, first of all, the three main points are; etc.
4. Listen for information that will provide explanations, examples, etc. to support the main ideas that the lecturer is presenting. Also, take into consideration the kinds of information that are common to the course/discipline.

5. Sit as near as possible to the front of the classroom as possible for nonverbal cues, visibility of the chalkboard, for hearing the instructor's voice, and for better concentration with far less distraction.
6. Be prepared. Survey study guide/outline/assignments before going to class. Review notes from the last lecture to see how the past lecture and reading relates to the present lecture. The more you know, the more interested you will be. It then becomes an exchange of ideas rather than a bombardment of unfamiliar ideas and unrelated facts.
7. Anticipate questions that you think will be answered during the lecture and keep an open mind. You don't have to accept everything, but try not to tune out or be judgmental before the message is fully developed.

IMPORTANT REASONS FOR TAKING NOTES

1. To note information which may not be found anywhere else.
2. To acquire information which the lecturer thinks is important and which may be covered in exams.
3. To compile a permanent record to review for exams.
4. To see the underlying organization and purpose of the lecture clearly.
5. To get better grades.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR NOTETAKING

1. Think before taking notes. Relate what the lecturer says to the information outlined in your study guide and to information common to the course.
2. Prepare before class by reading the assigned text material and becoming familiar with the major concepts.
3. Be selective. Listen to everything, but don't write everything down. Search for the main ideas and the important subpoints and details. Notes should be brief and legible.
4. Take accurate notes. Use your own words and the lecturer's word, translating them later. If you note your own ideas, use brackets to show that these are your own thoughts. []
5. Have a uniform system of punctuation and abbreviation (refer to list of abbreviations and symbols).
6. Don't worry about missing a point. Leave space and get the material you missed later.
7. Leave space for expanding or clarifying notes later.
8. Record all important facts (dates, names, places, or formulas). Copy diagrams and illustrations which will clarify your notes.
9. Don't erase or black out mistakes completely. Draw a single line through them to save time and energy. You may find later that the mistakes may have been important to the lecture after all.
10. Note how the lecture relates to the text material. If the lecturer repeats the text material, make a note of it. Be sure to note any elaboration or examples. Compare lecture notes with text notes and revise and consolidate as needed.
11. Review your notes after class. Reread and edit your notes as soon as possible while information is fresh in your mind. Write a summary (1 -2

- paragraphs) at the end of your notes.
12. Share your notes with other students in your study group and read their notes to see if you missed any important parts.

LISTENING/NOTE-TAKING

EXERCISE:

Apply one of the Note-taking methods you have learned in one of your lecture classes. Critique yourself by answering the following questions:

1. Did the Note-taking method you chose enable you to take good notes?

2. What problems did you encounter (if any) with the method you used?

3. What modifications to this method might be necessary in order to take better notes? _____

4. How comfortable do you feel about using this method as a regular note-taking strategy?

5. How do you feel about your note-taking abilities after doing this exercise?

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS SUMMARY

1. Complete outside reading and assignments to know more about the topic being presented.

2. Bring the right materials: pen, notebook, 3 ring-binder, highlighters, pencils, etc.
3. Sit front and center.
4. Listen, concentrate, pay attention and cut out distractions.
5. Do a short pre-class review.
6. Clarify your intentions: think about what you plan to get from the class and what you will give to it.
7. Postpone debate: when you disagree or don't like what you hear, don't allow yourself to close off or reject the material.
8. Participate in class: be active, ask questions, look at whoever is speaking.
9. Highlight and underline the areas of emphasis and obvious clues in your notes.
10. If you use a tape recorder, still take notes.

EXERCISE:

From the list above, select those items that have been a problem for you. For each one you choose, write a strategy you could use to help overcome this problem.

[Example: #2 - I could buy a plastic folder to keep pens and highlighters in and keep these in my 3-ring binder.]

NOTE-TAKING ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

=	-equals	ex.	-example
=	-does not equal	i.e.	-that is
<u>f</u>	-frequency	imp.	-important
e.g.	-for example	dept.	-department

coll.	-college	..	-therefore
subj.	-subject		-psychology
pol.	-politics, political	+	-plus, more or add
dem.	-democracy	-	-minus, less
lib.	-liberal		-is equivalent to
ind.	-individuals		-approaches, leads to,
.	-individual	relates to	
	-individuals	>	-greater than or equal to
assoc.	-association	<	-less than or equal to
biol.	-Biology		-increases, or goes up
info.	-information		-decrease , or goes down
intro.	-introduction	et al	-and others
max.	-maximum	ed.	-edition
min.	-minimum	ibid.	-in the same place
gov't	-government	i.e.	-that is
am't	-amount	n.	-note
cont'd-continued		nn.	-notes
		?	-why, question
		!	-stresses importance
		@	-at or approximately
		def.	-definition or define
		\$	-money, dollars
&	-and		
w/	-with		
w/o	-without		
vs	-versus or against		