

# ESL STUDENTS: STRATEGIES FOR TAKING NOTES IN CLASS

For the first few classes of every course and every semester, it can be challenging for students to become accustomed to the professor's lecture style and the special vocabulary associated with the topic. This may be even more challenging if English is not your first language. Following are some tips for taking notes in class.

## **BEFORE CLASS:**

- Go to class prepared; look over the chapter before you go to get the main ideas and learn some of the new topic-specific vocabulary
- Arrive at class at least 10 minutes early; you need every advantage you can get
- Sit at the front so you can hear and see better
- Try to meet the students sitting near you at the front
- If the classroom environment is one in which students ask questions, prepare one or two that you can ask
- If the prof sends PowerPoint slides before the class, print them out 3 per page with note-taking lines
- Read over all of the slides and look up some unfamiliar words (just SOME not ALL)

## **DURING THE CLASS:**

- DO NOT try to write down everything; you are there to make decisions about what is important
- DO NOT try to write in full sentences just write main ideas, key words
- DO NOT record the lesson; you will never learn to take proper notes and you will spend all of your time listening to lectures twice! Get as much information as you can the first time
- If you miss something that you are certain is very important, leave a space and fill it in after class: ask another student, check the reading text and the prof's Powerpoint slides, see the teacher or the TA
- Pay attention to questions that the professor asks the class. Listen to class discussions involving students and to the professor's response; you can take short notes about the questions and the answers
- If you hear an important word that you don't know, write it down phonetically, as it sounds, and ask about it after class
- Remember the students you met during the 10 minutes before the class started? Now is the time consult with them. During the break or after the class ask them about the information you missed. They may have missed it too! Perhaps you can ask them if they would like to form a study group. Try to get their contact information

## **AFTER CLASS:**

- As soon as you can, read over all of your notes and organize the details. Fill in any missing ideas and find the main ideas.
- Consult your classmate(s) / study group
- Use the professor or TA's office hours to ask for extra help; they are waiting to meet you!