

When Instructors talk fast

1. Take more time to prepare for class.

Familiarity with a subject increases your ability to pick out key points. If an instructor lectures quickly or is difficult to understand, conduct a thorough preview of material to be covered.

2. Be willing to make choices.

When an instructor talks fast, focus your attention on key points. Instead of trying to write everything down, choose what you think is important. Occasionally you will make a wrong choice and neglect an important point. Worse things could happen. Stay with the lecture, write down key words, and revise your notes immediately after class.

3. Exchange photocopies of notes with classmates.

Your fellow students might write down something you missed. At the same time, your notes might help them.

4. Leave large empty spaces in your notes.

Leave plenty of room for filling in information you missed. Use a symbol that signals you've missed something, so you can remember to come back to it.

5. See the instructor after class.

Take your class notes with you and show the instructor what you missed.

6. Use a tape recorder. Taping a lecture gives you a chance to hear it again whenever you choose. Some tape recorders will allow you to vary the speed of the tape. With this feature, you can perform magic and actually slow down the instructor's speech.

7. Before class, take notes on your reading. You can take detailed notes on the text before class. Leave plenty of blank space. Take these notes with you to class and simply add your lecture notes to them.

8. Go to the lecture again. Many classes are taught in multiple sections. That gives you the chance to hear a lecture at least twice—once at your regular class time and again in another section of the class.

9. Learn shorthand. Some note-taking systems, known as shorthand, are specifically designed for getting ideas down fast. Books and courses are available to help you learn these systems. You can also devise your own shorthand. Invent one- or two-letter symbols for common words and phrases.

10. Ask questions—even if you're totally lost. Most instructors allow time for questions. This is a time to ask about the points you missed.

There may be times when you feel so lost that you can't formulate a question. That's OK. One option is to just report this fact to the instructor. The instructor can often guide you to a clear question. Another option is to just ask any question. Often this will lead you to the question you really want to ask.

11. Ask the instructor to slow down.

This is the most obvious solution. If asking her to slow down doesn't work, ask her to repeat what you missed.



EXERCISE #20 THE IN-CLASS OXYGENATOR

When you become sleepy in class, the problem might be lack of oxygen. You can run through the following process in 30 seconds.

1. *Straighten your spine. Put both feet on the floor, uncross your arms and legs, sit up straight, and hold your head up straight.*

2. *Take a deep breath and while you're holding it, tense the muscles in your body. Start with the muscles in your feet, then the legs, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck, jaw, forehead, arms, and hands. Hold these muscles tense for the count of five and then relax and exhale.*

3. *Breathe deeply three times. Inhale slowly and deeply, breathing into your belly as well as your chest. Pause momentarily at the top of the breath and then exhale completely. When you have exhaled as much as you can, force out more air by contracting the muscles of your stomach. Do this breathing three times.*

4. *Repeat step #2. You've now activated all of your muscles and filled your body with oxygen. You are ready to return your attention to the task at hand.*

Practice this exercise now by completing it twice. Then make a mental note so that the next time you're sleepy in class or while you're studying, you can use this exercise. With a little practice, you can make it subtle. Your instructor and classmates won't even notice you're doing it.

Ellis, Dave. (1997) *Becoming a Master Student*, 8th Ed.

Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. pg. 139