Listening: In the Classroom

1. General Suggestions for Classroom Behavior

⇒ Sit near the front of the classroom. This helps to create a good impression, eliminate distractions, etc.
⇒ If you are bored during class (occasionally), review previous class notes. At least you'll be doing something which is helpful and positive.
⇒ Copy down everything on the board. A single word may be a clue to a test item or be useful to you later.

2. Parts of a Lecture

♦ INTRODUCTION. The opening remarks usually have no instructional purpose, yet may set the tone of the session.
♦ THESIS. This is the sentence or the statement that the instructor makes which gives you the topic for the rest of the hour.
♦ BODY. This is the largest part of the lecture and demands your most active listening. There are usually five or six main points to be made with discussion and clarification of each.
♦ SUMMARY. There is a tendency to tune out this part of the lecture, but the good listener realizes that this is his/her means to check understanding of what the lecture was all about.

3. Listening Checklist

Before Listening

◊ Prepare ahead of time—read assigned chapter, re-read notes, etc.
◊ Think ahead; anticipate what is going to be said.
◊ Avoid distractions—noisy students, open windows, etc.
◊ Sit where you can hear and see clearly, preferably toward the front of the classroom.

While Listening

◊ Listen for ways to relate ideas to previous, lectures, to the textbook, and to previous experiences.
◊ Listen for what is being said, not how it's being said.
◊ Do not try to write everything down.
◊ Be ready to participate.
◊ Look for clues from the professor that indicate what he/she considers important. (vocal, postural, and visual cues)

After Listening

◊ Review what was said as soon as class is over.
◊ Seek answers to questions that arise.

How to Improve Your Listening Skills in College

1. Be prepared - Prior to going to class make sure to do the required reading for that day and review notes from previous lectures.

2. Concentrate on the lecture itself, not the lecturer - Try not to let yourself become distracted by the lecturer's or instructor's mannerisms, voice quality, or delivery technique. You should concentrate on what is said, not on how it is said.

3. Listen with an open mind - Everyone has their own opinions about things and you don't have to accept everything that is said in a class. But you should maintain an open-minded attitude. Don't let your opposition to a subject or issue block out the message being discussed before the point is fully developed.

4. Keep physically alert - Attempt to minimize any visual or hearing difficulties by sitting near the front of the classroom, near the person speaking, and maintain a comfortable but alert posture.

5. Keep mentally alert - Try to think of likely test questions as the material is presented. Also compare content in the lecture with that in the textbook. Active participation in class discussions is also important. Try to keep yourself from becoming distracted by the floor, ceiling, stuff going on outside through the windows (if there are windows in the classroom), or others around you.

6. Use the listen-think-write process - Practice listening attentively to the material that is being presented. Then evaluate critically its importance and any evidence to support it. Finally, select what is the most appropriate content for your notes. Record that in your own words.

7. Be flexible - You might try taking fewer notes if you are struggling to get it all in or using different note taking systems depending on the type of presentation and the style of the speaker.
Getting the Most out of Discussions:

Some of the most valuable learning you can do in college comes from what is often the least valuable part of your grade...class discussion. Whether, online or face to face, discussions are a precious tool in the pursuit of knowledge. To get the most out of discussions remember these five points:

1. Do Your Homework—Always do the required homework, it ensures you are well prepared for any class discussion that may arise. Pay attention and your professor may set specific guidelines, like: “Read chapter two and be prepared to discuss it in our next class,” or “here are two questions that I want you to reflect upon and be prepared to discuss in our next class session.” This type of specific advice lets you know what is important to study so that you are prepared.

2. Know the Ground Rules—It is important for you to learn what the professor expects. Be sure to find out the grade percentage for class discussions and read the syllabus carefully. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask your professor for clarification. You also need to adapt to the discussion environment of that class. You will need to take things like class size and format into consideration as well as whether or not the class discussions are face-to-face or online.

3. Participate Actively—To participate actively, remember the triple-A listening technique:
   - A-I = Maintain a positive ATTITUDE. The primary prerequisite to effective listening is a positive mental attitude because it sets the stage for open-mindedness, which is essential to learning and comprehension. Remember it doesn't take any talent to brand a topic or someone else's ideas as “boring.” Discussions are a cooperative activity so do your part by remaining engaged. Don't be judgmental or speak up without thinking your point through.
   - A-2 = Strive to pay ATTENTION. Attention is the path that will lead you into the wonderful state of concentration. Without concentration there is no focus, and without focus there is very little learning. If you pay attention and concentrate, you will become an active listener who is able to synthesize new information with facts and ideas you have already learned. Be sure to work at listening and resist distractions
   - A-3 = Cultivate a Capacity for ADJUSTMENT. Even though a class discussion may start out with a specific topic or question, you need to be mentally limber enough to follow its inevitable twists and turns. You can cultivate your capacity for adjustment by remaining flexible while taking notes, by exercising your mind through exposing it to complex or different ideas, and by keeping your mind open to ideas and information that you may initially want to tune out.

4. AIM to Make Your Points Effectively—In order to earn a good grade from your professor, the respect of your classmates, and to truly add something valuable to a discussion, you AIM should be to make your points Accurate (by making sure they are well-supported and well-expressed), Interactive (by keeping comments connected to the topic and previous points), and Memorable (by making your points easy to follow and based on fresh insights).

5. Follow Up Promptly—A good discussion may be full of fresh ideas, but those ideas have a short life if you don’t make an effort to reinforce them in your memory. Be sure to take notes on discussion and be sure to not just review your text and lecture notes, but review discussion notes too.

Source: