



# Navigating Lecture-Based Classes



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The purpose of this document is to guide students on how to navigate lecture-based classes

## Introduction

It is always important to get things right. In fact, as Goldilocks would be the first to tell you, it's particularly important to get things *just* right.

Depending upon where your interests lie, you may already have come across the Goldilocks principle<sup>1</sup>. Aficionados of Astronomy may have come across the term 'Goldilocks Zone', which refers to the zone around a star that is neither too hot nor too cold (for liquid water to exist on planetary surfaces). Dabblers in Developmental Psychology may have heard of the Goldilocks Effect, which refers to infants' preferences for events that are neither too simple nor too complex (relative to their understanding of the world). And Fans of Finance may have heard terms like 'Goldilocks Economy' and 'Goldilocks Market', which are used to encapsulate philosophies with an ease that Red Riding Hood could never hope to achieve.

While IIMB has not yet adopted a Goldilocks Standard and has no Goldilocks Theory or Goldilocks Framework to its name, you *will* find its faculty incorporating the Goldilocks principle into their teachings. In other words, you can be assured that the medium through which you receive your instruction will be just right for the topic at hand. For just as you wouldn't take a sword to a gunfight, fell a forest for a notebook, or use three idioms where two would have sufficed, you wouldn't use the case method of instruction when the lecture method would convey material more appropriately.

The lecture method has been much maligned in recent years and for good reason. Criticisms levelled against lecture-based teaching include its inability to accommodate individual needs, its low student-involvement rates, and its stifling of the development of self-learning skills. But while all these criticisms are true, they stand on the extreme end of the debate. The lecture method *does* have its advantages. It can be used by an educator to complement and clarify text material, it can provide structure especially when students are attempting to assimilate new topics or concepts, and it allows educators to optimise the pace, direction, and content of a presentation (amongst others). In short, there are several situations in which the lecture method of teaching is a more appropriate medium of instruction than more dynamic teaching methods.

We understand that it can be frustrating to find that after hours of sitting through what felt like years of lectures at school every day, you've graduated to sit through years of hour-devouring lectures at your university. But you will soon find that unlike your school days, your faculty at IIMB use a more interactive style of lecturing that is easier to engage with. Use the suggestions below to get the most out of the lectures you attend.

## Taking Lecture Notes Effectively

Taking lecture notes is important for several different reasons. Taking notes helps you listen carefully in class and allows you to gauge your understanding as the lecture progresses. Your notes also tell you what to focus on when reading textbooks. They may be easier to remember than text because you've put the ideas down in your own words and according to your pattern of thinking. Here are some suggestions on effective note-taking:

## Lecture Clues

Writing down every word that the lecturer says during class is not possible. It also isn't the point of taking notes. Your notes should be quick aids to understanding—they should contain key ideas and

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldilocks\\_principle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldilocks_principle)

focus on the central message of the material. They should, in short, only contain what is important. If you're wondering how to recognize important information when you hear it, use these clues<sup>2</sup>:

- Material written on the blackboard/whiteboard is important.
- Anything that the lecturer repeats or emphasizes is important. Emphasis can be judged by the professor's tone of voice and body language. Emphasis can also be judged from the amount of time the lecturer spends on the idea—or by the number of illustrations and examples he or she uses.
- Signal phrases. These include phrases like "there are two points of view on..." "the first/second/third reason is..." "in contrast..." "in conclusion..." etc. Information preceded by signal phrases is always important.

Reviewing at the beginning of the class and summarizing at the end of the class are also helpful, as are formulas, specific facts, and definitions.

If you have permission, take photographs of the board plan that the faculty has developed.

### Keeping Notes Brief and Organised

Your notes should balance brevity with clarity. These tips can help you keep your notes short and simple without compromising coherence:

- Consider using an appropriate phrase, in place of a sentence. Consider using a suitable word if that can replace a phrase.
- Apply symbols or abbreviations if you deem necessary but maintain consistency.
- Make use of headings and subheadings to organize information.
- Use a numbering system. Indention can help you differentiate between key and trivial points.
- If you skip a point, leave a space for it and get the required information later. Use symbols, if necessary, to remind yourself that you've missed something.
- Leave room for additional notes or future rewrites.
- Date your notes, put them in order, and number pages. Don't write on scraps of paper.

Remember that we tend to forget very quickly. Just because you understand something in class doesn't mean you'll remember it. Take notes and rework (or rewrite) them immediately after class—it's possible to find, at a later date, that you can't understand something you've taken down. Don't worry if this doesn't come naturally to you. Taking notes effectively and being able to separate important information from superfluous detail is a skill that comes with practice<sup>3</sup>.

Tip: To reinforce your learning, review your notes after a few days, and then again in a few weeks. Try to link the concepts you've learned both with other topics in the subject and across other subjects. Knowledge is valuable only when it is used, and it is used most effectively when integrated with the world around you.

When given the choice between sound advice and a witty one-liner, people understandably prefer the one-liner. So, we won't end this discourse on the note above, but on the quote below:

*Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.*  
- Albert Einstein

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<sup>2</sup> <https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/Assets/Articles/10-Tips-on-note-taking-during-lectures>

<sup>3</sup> <https://willamette.edu/offices/lcenter/resources/study-strategies/notes.html>