5. TAKING LECTURE NOTES

When you are taking notes during a lecture, it is good to listen and watch for “cues” or signs that tell you what information is important and how the lecture is organized. Cues can be words, phrases or actions (such as the professor writing on the board).

- Look at the lecture transcript from a biology class below.

- Notice the cues the professor uses to tell the students how the lecture is organized and what information is important.

Today we’re going to look at the levels of biological organization that exist in nature. There are ten levels of biological organization, and we’re going to discuss them in order of largest to smallest. Before we begin, I just want to say that this is an incredibly exciting time to be studying biology, as we are starting to understand more and more about how all these levels are connected. . . The more we learn about life, the more we can appreciate how miraculous it really is. . . I myself just became a grandmother five months ago, so I am very in awe of that miraculousness right now. . . The first level is the biosphere. . . Let me write that on the board for you. . . the biosphere is all the environments on Earth that have life in them. . . In the biosphere we find land masses. . . bodies of water such as oceans, lakes, and rivers. . . and the atmosphere up to several kilometers. . . The next level is the ecosystems. . .

**EXERCISE:**
Here are some cues that let you know what the professor is doing during the lecture, and what you should note down.
Use the last column to add other cues that your professors use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The professor is …</th>
<th>Verbal cues</th>
<th>Non-verbal cues</th>
<th>Add other “cues” your professors use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Introducing the topic** | *Today, we’re going to look at / discuss...*  
*What we’re going to focus on today is...*  
*What I'd like to discuss today is...* | *The professor begins to write on the board*  
*The professor turns towards the class to talk.* | |
| **Outlining the information** | *First, second, next...*  
*Another _____ is ...*  
*An additional _____ is...*  
*A further _____ is...*  
*Not only X, but also ______.* | | |
| **Emphasizing important information** | *This is important.*  
*It's important that you know...*  
*You should be aware that...*  
*You should write this down.* | *The professor writes or points to something on the board.*  
*The professor asks a question.*  
*The professor passes out information.* | |
| **Indicating less essential information** | *Before we begin...*  
*As a side note...*  
*I myself...*  
*This is a bit off the topic, but...*  
*This is somewhat unrelated, but...*  
*By the way...* | *The professor puts down her notes, and starts talking more informally.* | |
| **Defining a term** | *X is...*  
*X means ...*  
*Another word for X is...*  
*X is defined as/by...* | *The professor pauses or speaks more slowly to explain a word.* | |
| **Giving examples** | *For example...*  
*An example of this is...*  
*Like..., such as...*  
*To illustrate this...* | | |
| **Restating or concluding** | *So...*  
*To review what we’ve just discussed...*  
*So, what were the main points we discussed today?* | | |