

INTRODUCTION TO NOTE-TAKING

Building on what they have learnt so far

- Tell students that you will start with 1-2 hours of brainstorming/lecture, and then do some speeches
- During the brainstorming ask them to tell you what the basic aim of interpreting is (*communicating a message*) and what they have learnt so far i.e. what skills they have learnt
 - *Active listening*
 - *Dévérbalisation (getting away from words)*
 - *Identifying the structure of a speech, through*
 - *Analysis*
 - *Communicating clear ideas in an engaging way*

Emphasise that they will be doing *exactly* the same things, but will have notes to help them. The basic three processes (listening, analysing, and reproducing) remain the same.

- Then you can move on to asking them about what they consider to be their strengths and weakness, and how they think note-taking will help (or compound) these.
- * note these down so you can show how notes can help solve their *individual* problems. This also helps to stress the individual nature of notes, which will be different for each student

EXPLAIN that what you're about to tell them is a general approach, based on what we know from experience to work well. It is not a rigid one-size-fits-all system though – everyone has to find what works for them.

Tell them what tends to happen at this stage -

- They stop listening
- All the focus goes on the notes (esp symbols)

EXPLAIN that it is quite normal to have a drop in performance

REMIND them that notes are a *means* they are not an end in themselves

The whys and wherefores of note-taking

You can ask students to answer the questions through brainstorming, but be sure to cover the following points:

WHY?

- You may use it at work (especially if you have a retour)
- Speeches will get longer and more difficult, and not designed for listening exercises
- Notes relieve your 'memory' as you can get facts down and concentrate better on the point of what is being said (though you will still rely on your memory)
- Notes will enable you to record the structure of the speech

- Thanks to this too you can concentrate better on what he is saying, as you don't need to focus so much on how it hangs together
- So ultimately notes allow you to listen better
- Notes may help solve some of the problems encountered so far
- It is the best teaching tool we have!

WHERE?

- On a ringed note-pad
- On one-side only (then turn pad over and use the other)

Show them how to hold the note-pad and turn over the page (folding)

WHEN?

- When you have understood something and not before
- Figures and names should go down immediately

Ask students what they think they should do if a speaker is explaining something which is very difficult to understand

Answer: take fewer notes or none at all – so you can concentrate 100% on the reasoning. Note the gist of it and move on (better than pages of stuff you don't understand!)

WHAT?

- You have understood
- What you tend to forget
- Structure of reasoning
- Key words representing ideas rather than individual words
- Names and numbers
- Quotations and loaded words that need to be repeated faithfully
- Asides
- The first and last sentences (in greater detail)

HOW?

- Legibly
- Uncluttered
- SVO (subject, verb, object diagonally across the page)
- Analytically i.e.
 - Separation of ideas (lines)
 - Juxtaposition (vertical lines alongside a list)
 - A margin for links
 - Cause and effect (arrows!)
- Arrows (for up or down/ to refer back to something)
- Tenses
- Abbreviations
- Symbols (give examples – encourage sharing)
- Asides (in brackets)
- Greater > less <

- Emphasis and attenuation (underlining or underdotting)
- Negation
- Frequent verbal expressions (can, want, must, say, think, agree, discuss etc)
- Frequent links (but...and...therefore)
- In what language (discuss this with them – ideally in the target language, as then the processing has already happened)

Conclude the lecture by reminding them again that

- notes are
- personal (only you have to read them and only straight after)
- not an end in themselves but a means to an end
- they should experiment and play (learning by doing – not a test!)
- they should expect a dip in performance, as attention divided
- NEVER stop listening
- Practice, practice, practice

It is important to do some actual note-taking during the first session. So you can move on to giving speeches:

SPEECHES

- It is a good idea repeat speeches that were made for listening and concentration exercises, adding a little more (even doing it first as a listening exercise and then noting)
- Be sure to indicate the subject, you can give a lot of information before you start at this stage
- Brainstorm the subject with the students
- The speeches should allow them to acquire the note-taking skills so make links and the structure obvious, don't be too dense or fast, have a clear line of argumentation etc. (see the practical guide to structuring speeches)

Other ideas

- Always have a pure customer
- Have 1 person note some parts of the speech on the board
- Note yourself and show them (model)
- Sit next to someone and see how they note (too fast, too much)
- Look at their notes after each speech at this stage
- Encourage them to look over them again, and re-write them at home
- Give a speech in chunks to allow them to take notes not under time pressure (but then they give back the whole speech)
- Ask for a summary of the speech (e.g. in three sentences the main points)
- Have 1 person *not* take notes and make a comparison with the person who does take notes