A Note-taking Guide for ESL Students

- **Remember, the rhythm of spoken English tends to be uneven.** In some ways spoken English is like the syncopated rhythm of jazz. Each syllable in an English word or sentence has a strong or weak stress. Speakers rush over unstressed syllables and stretch out stressed syllables.
- **Listen for major points.** Don’t worry if you don’t understand every detail, example, or illustration. Keep listening! You’re not expected to have perfect comprehension.
- **Learn to spot detours.** If the instructor digresses, or gets off track there will be many clues to let you know. The clues often come through body language. Some speakers, for example, take off their glasses or move around when the move away from their prepared outline.
- **Notice what the lecturer writes on the board.** Pay close attention, and put it in your notes. Also, be sure to pick up handouts and other material distributed in class.
- **Read the assigned material before class.** Preparation is the single most important way to ready oneself to understand key concepts, words, and phrases.
- **Come to class on time, and sit close to the front.** You should be in your seat, prepared to concentrate and take notes, before the instructor enters the room.
- **Take notes in English.** You will become more fluent in the language if you try to think and write about the subject in English.
- **Read over your notes as soon as possible after class.** Write in any additional information that you weren’t able to put down during the lecture.
- **Ask for clarification if you don’t fully understand what is said.** Don’t be shy. The explanation may help others too.

Adapted from: AAP Student Service association of American Publishers