Focusing on Class

Nodding off in class? Missing vital information that turns up later on tests? Here are some tips to getting the most out of class.

Use the BFAR System:

1. Before class…
   - Get ready before the teacher starts talking. Have books, notebooks, pens, etc. handy. Look over last lecture’s notes.
   - Take care of hunger and sleepiness before coming to class.
   - Don’t cut class; you can’t concentrate on material you don’t understand because you weren’t there last time.
   - Sit up front, where the teacher can see you. Research shows that, all things (like regular attendance, getting assignments in on time, and studying the material) being equal, students who sit up front get higher grades. Why? If the teacher doesn’t know you, and is waffling between two grades, he/she will probably go for the lower one; teachers are usually under pressure not to give to many high grades.

2. Focus during class…
   - Make eye contact with the teacher. It keeps you both alert!
   - Figure out structure of the lecture early. Most lectures have one major point and three to five subpoints. Watch for organizational leads like, “First, we need to consider…. Second, there’s…."
   - Don’t just write it all down, like a tape recorder; you can’t afford not to think about the stuff until later. Class time is the time to ask questions.

3. Absorb the material…
   - As questions occur to you, jot them down in your notes, and follow up with asking them in class, or visiting the teacher to discuss them.
   - As the teacher lectures, think of test questions likely to come from the material.

4. Reinforce after class…
   - Take a minute or two before you leave class to jot down a short summary of what the lecture was about.
   - Review the notes as soon as you can, certainly within 24 hours.
   - Review notes daily up until test time. Don’t get out of touch with them, and then try to cram them in one or two nights before the exam; it just doesn’t work.

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