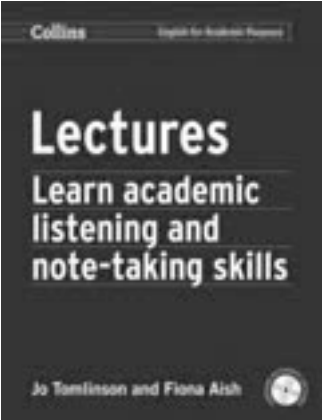


Lectures

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For second or foreign language students entering English-medium university classes, lecture comprehension can prove to be a major hurdle. Students may find that academic lectures are quite different from their previous listening experiences in that they can be quite long, with the majority of speaking done by the lecturer in long turns, and in that they are transactional (primarily concerned with the giving of information). These challenges of academic listening can leave students feeling unprepared or overwhelmed. *Lectures: Learn listening and note-taking skills* aims to address this problem by helping students prepare for authentic university discourse.

Lectures is one of six books in the Collins EAP Academic Skills Series. This series provides materials for EAP students who either are preparing to enter university classes or are in the early stages of their undergraduate career. This book is designed to be used either for self-study on the part of learners or in classes with an emphasis on study skills, and is accompanied by a CD which contains audio clips and authentic lectures that are used in activities throughout the book.

The overall goal of *Lectures* is to equip students who are about to enter higher education with the listening and note-taking skills they will need to be successful in lecture-style classes. In aid of this goal, each of the ten chapters in this book focuses on one key listening or note-taking skill, covering topics such as preparing for lectures, features of speech, thinking critically, and strategies for note taking. Every chapter begins with a list of the skills that students will learn in the coming pages, along with a self-evaluation quiz designed to guide students in reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses in each

targeted area. This is followed by explanations of the nature and importance of the chapter's topic, interspersed with a variety of activities for practice. Chapters conclude with a bulleted list of the key points covered. After every two chapters, there is a set of activities to be used in conjunction with one of the authentic lectures on the audio CD. These lectures and their corresponding activities are presented separately from the book's chapters; however, they are targeted to allow students to practice the skills and strategies that they have learned up to that point. Throughout the book, difficult vocabulary is clearly glossed in the margins of the page where it occurs. The book is well-formatted and the progression of ideas and activities in each chapter is easy to follow.

One exemplary chapter is Chapter 6, *Critical Thinking*, which aims to guide students in both evaluating arguments and opinions within lectures and understanding lecturer perspective. The self-evaluation quiz at the beginning of this chapter asks students to consider such statements as "my lecturer has no opinion of the subject" and "academic study is objective" in order to develop awareness of their own perceptions about these issues. Subtopics covered within the chapter include evaluating ideas presented within a lecture, analyzing lecturer's point of view, and recognizing the purposes of rhetorical questions. Subtopics are explained thoroughly, often through a combination of information and clear examples. Activities then introduce vocabulary related to critical thinking (e.g., bias, assumption, evidence) and encourage students to develop an awareness of the positive or negative connotations of utterances (e.g., Smith's disputed idea...). The chapter also includes a pronunciation activity focused on recognizing and decoding speech containing extra sound insertions and Schwa sounds.

Throughout all chapters, the material presented in this book is likely to be highly useful for students entering English-medium universities. In particular, students who have not had extensive exposure to university classes will benefit from the chapters introducing the purpose and structure of lectures, which prepare students for the particular characteristics of university-level academic discourse and provide strategies and skills to help them adjust to a new academic setting.

The activities throughout the book are varied; yet, they provide repeated practice of core listening skills. For example, strategies for predicting the content of a lecture are presented in Chapter 2, and the activities accompanying lectures throughout the rest of the book provide continuous practice with this skill. The note-taking activities both address and account for individual variation within learners, guiding students to think critically about techniques and strategies that they find particularly effective. Many of the activities, such as the self-evaluation quizzes in each chapter, are designed to encourage self-reflection on the part of students in order to help them become more autonomous learners. The final chapter of the book continues this theme by providing a series of activities that encourage students to assess their progress and make a plan for continued improvement. Students may find these types of activities to be highly motivating, since they encourage individual growth and autonomy.

Perhaps because it is intended to be equally as useful for students engaged in self-study as for students using the textbook within a classroom, none of the activities in the book involve group or partner work, and there are no speaking activities included. Teachers could easily adapt activities to include an interactive or social element. However, some teachers may find the lack of prepared, interactive activities to be a drawback of this text. Additionally, although the lectures and audio clips present material on a variety of topics such as innovation in business and history, the chapters are skills driven rather than

content driven, meaning that this book would likely not be a sufficient primary textbook in a class with a content-based curriculum. It would, however, be a useful supplementary text in any class where study skills and note-taking skills are a focus.

Lectures succeeds in introducing a variety of skills and strategies that will benefit learners preparing to enter English-medium university classes. Overall, the content of this book is highly relevant to EAP learners, and teachers are likely to find that the activities encourage student autonomy and critical thinking while providing ample practice with key listening and note-taking skills. Although this book may not be a suitable primary text for all classrooms, both teachers and students will find that it contains a great deal of extremely useful informational content and practice.

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