Signal Words and Phrases

1. Introducing

At the beginning of a lecture, or a section of a lecture, the lecturer will give you some idea about the structure of the lecture. Listen for these signals as it will help you understand what the lecturer is saying.

What I intend to say is What I'd like to do is to discuss What I intend to do is to explain In my talk today, My topic today is Today, I'm going to talk about I'm going to talk to you about My colleagues and I are going to give a short presentation on Today I want to consider In this talk, I would like to concentrate on The subject of this talk is The purpose of this talk is to This talk is designed to	...

2. Giving background information

Before the new information is given, the lecturer will often

summarize what you are expected to know about the subject to be covered. This could refer back to a previous lecture or to some background reading you should have done.

As we know As we have already seen As we have all read It's clear that It goes without saying We all understand It is understood You'll remember	...

3. Defining

In a lecture, it is often necessary to define the terms that will be used. This is important as familiar words can have specific meanings in different subjects.

X	is is called is known as may be defined as	...

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	is a type of Y that/which	
By X, I mean		
This term is used generally to mean In the field of Y, the term refers to		
A type of Y which is X.		

4. Enumerating/Listing

The lecturer will often be explicit about the order in which new points will be mentioned. To make the order clear we use various links and connectives.

Firstly Secondly Next Then Thirdly Lastly Finally				...
First of all In the first place For one thing To begin with In the second place For another thing				
The	first second next last	point I'd like to make	is	
My		point		

5. Giving examples

In lectures, it is common to make generalizations. These generalizations are often supported with examples. These signals can help you to understand which generalizations the examples refer to.

This ...	is	shown exemplified illustrated	by	...

For example, For instance, You only have to think of Remember,	

A key experiment	shows exemplifies illustrates	this. ...

This is shown by the following examples: The following are examples of this: The following is a case in point: Let me give you a couple of examples:	...

X	is a case in point.

Take	X	for example for instance

...	such as	...

6. Showing importance/Emphasizing

When you are taking notes, you cannot write down every word. You need to distinguish between important and less important information. The lecturer can use these signals to draw your attention to the important points.

I want to stress I want to highlight I'd like to emphasize I'd like to put emphasis on It's important to remember that We should bear in mind that Don't forget that The crucial point is The essential point is The fundamental point is	...

Furthermore, What's more, This supports my argument that, It follows, therefore, that	...

What (in effect) we are saying is	

7. Clarifying/Explaining/Putting it in other words

The lecturer will try to explain the meaning of difficult concepts. To do this he or she may repeat the information using different words. It is important for you to recognize that this is the same information expressed differently and not new information.

In other words, Or rather, That is to say, Basically To put it another way, If we put that another way, By which I mean Or you could say The point I'm making is That is to say, That is, Namely, i.e. That means			...
What I	'm suggesting 'm trying to say meant to say should have said	is	
Let me put it another way.			

8. Elaboration (Giving further information)

These signals show that the lecturer is proceeding in the same direction and giving more information.

Furthermore, An additional point Another point A further point A similar point In addition Moreover Similarly Apart from, Not only ., but We can add I could add that Further	...

As well as, Besides	
...	also. too. as well.

9. Giving contrasting information

These signals show that the lecturer is proceeding in a different direction and giving unexpected or contrasting information. It is important to listen to this.

Although However On the other hand Whereas Despite Nevertheless But Alternatively	...

10. Classifying

When we classify, we arrange members of a group. The lecturer may use the following signals to show that a classification is being made.

There are	N	types kinds classes categories sorts varieties	of X	: Y and Z. . These are Y and Z.	
The				are Y and Z.	
X	consists of comprises can be divided into	N	categories classes kinds types varieties	. These are Y and Z. : Y and Z.	
Y and Z are	classes kinds types categories varieties	of X.			

X may be classified	according to on the basis of depending on	...

11. Digressing

Sometimes the lecturer may leave the main subject of the lecture for a while and then come back to it.

Incidentally By the way While I remember Before I forget	...

12. Concluding

The lecture should end with a summary of the main points made. The following signals will help you to identify this.

So, We've seen that What I've been saying is that First we looked at ... and we saw that Then we considered ... and I argued that In short, To sum up To summarize In conclusion, I'd like to emphasize that	...
That completes That's the end of	my lecture. this talk.