

# Listening and Note-taking Skills Workbook

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All materials created and recorded by Rebecca Everley, Ph.D. except for the following:

Listening for definitions and key words practice, exercises 2 and 3 written by Jolene McConnell

Listing practice exercise 1 written by Emily Elliott

Cover designed by Eric Everley

## Answer Keys and Scripts

If you are an instructor and are interested in using this book for a class, email the Kansas State University English Language Program at [elp@k-state.edu](mailto:elp@k-state.edu) to get a copy of the answer keys and audio file scripts.



# Chapter 1 - Topics and Main Ideas

## How to determine the topic and main ideas

### Topics

Just as in reading, the topic is the one word or short phrase that can describe what the entire talk, lecture, presentation, etc. is about. The topic might also be the title of the presentation. Often before telling you the topic, the speaker will tell a short story or ask some leading questions to get you to begin thinking about the topic. This is similar to a hook you would find in a well-written essay. There are some phrases that the speaker will use to let you know what the topic is. Here are a few examples:

- Today we'll look at . . .
- I'm going to talk about ...
- Let's discuss . . .
- Today's topic is . . .

Add some other phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Main Ideas

Unlike in reading, main ideas in listening do not need to be complete sentences. This is because we do not always speak in complete sentences. The main ideas are the bigger ideas that the speaker is going to focus on. The speaker may have 2 main ideas or 10 main ideas depending on the length of the talk, lecture, presentation, etc. Finding the main ideas in listening is similar to finding them in reading or in writing. They are found between the introduction and the conclusion. There are some phrases that the speaker will use to let you know what the main ideas are and in what order they will be presented. Here are a few examples:

- First, we'll look at . . .
- Then, I'm going to talk about ...
- Finally, we'll discuss . . .
- The next point I'll make is that is . . .

Add some other phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Topics and Main Ideas Activity

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Vocabulary			
science-fiction	habit	narwhals	blue whales
belugas	orcas	Roosevelt	

**Directions:** For each introduction, listen for the topic and main ideas.

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

topic: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)

topic: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 3 – [click for Exercise 3 audio](#)

topic: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #4: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 4 – [click for Exercise 4 audio](#)

topic: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think that chronological means? Why do you think that? \_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 2 - Using an Outline

### How to use an outline

One of the most common and easiest ways to take notes is to use an outline. An outline is when you write a new idea on a new line and then write all the details and examples indented below them. These “new ideas” do not have to be the main ideas but simply a new idea or point that the speaker is making. Indenting can help you to find information in your notes easier when you are studying them later. It also helps to group pieces of information together making their connection more obvious.

### Formal Outline

A formal outline is very structured. The first level uses Roman numerals (I, IV, X etc.). The second level uses upper case letters (A, B, C, etc.). The third level uses numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.). The fourth level uses lower case letters (a, b, c, etc.). Each level is indented in farther than the one before it. It must also be parallel and grammatically correct. This means that if there is an A, then there must be a B; if 1 is an adjective, then 2 must also be an adjective; etc.

Here is a short example:

- I. Main Idea #1
  - A. detail for MI#1
    - 1. example
    - 2. example
  - B. detail for MI#1
- II. Main Idea #2

A formal outline is a good way to start a speech or an essay but is not as helpful when taking notes in a lecture. This is because it is too structured, and most speakers are not very structured. There are times when a lecturer will provide a formal outline of their notes or agenda.

### Informal Outline

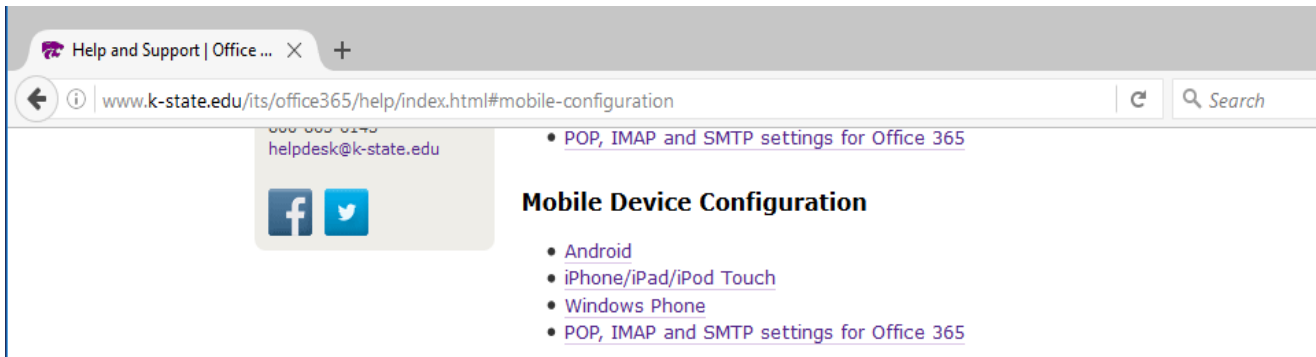
An informal outline also uses levels and indenting, but it is less structured and does not need to be parallel or grammatically correct. It doesn't need numbers or letters. Each time there is new idea, you start a new section. Here is a short example:

- Idea
  - detail for ideas
    - examples
- New idea



## Practice Making an Outline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the short talk and fill in the outline.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Main Idea #3 \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





## Chapter 3 - Details and Examples

### How to listen for details and examples

**Details** are the small pieces of information that are given about a subject. Think about yourself. When we describe ourselves, we often give details. We tell our height, weight, hair color, eye color, and the different things we enjoy or don't enjoy. We might also include some dates, like our birthday, the year we graduated high school, and when we came to K-State.

These are all details, not examples.

**Examples** are people or things we add in to help explain a larger idea or as the specifics in a category. When we are giving details about ourselves, we might include that we enjoy Italian food and then give some examples such as spaghetti and chicken alfredo. So, spaghetti and chicken alfredo are examples of Italian food.

Some examples of common words or phrases that are used when giving examples are:

...for example...

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

...such as...

Some examples include...

Add some other phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

The speaker may also use a simple "be" sentence:

Some famous fast food restaurants are McDonald's, Burger King, and KFC. - In this sentence, McDonald's

Burger King, and KFC are examples of famous fast food restaurants.

## Details and Examples practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Vocabulary				
genre	comedy	romantic	Tom Hanks	Meg Ryan
Seattle	volcano	buddy	Will Smith	Indiana Jones
post-secondary	vocational	cosmetology		

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the excerpt and take notes. Be sure to listen for the details.

1. What are the types of movies listed here? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who are two of the actors that were discussed? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are two examples of the second type of comedy discussed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the characteristics of the first type of comedy discussed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which type of movie would you prefer to watch? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 2

**Directions:** Re-listen to the excerpt from Exercise 1 and determine the following.

topic: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

main idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_



**Exercise 3 – [click for Exercise 3 audio](#)**

**Directions:** *Listen to the excerpt and take notes. Be sure to listen for the examples.*

1. What is the topic of this talk? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Give four examples of places you go to school after high school. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are three things that you could study at a vocational school? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two details you heard about cosmetology school? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What type of post-secondary school did you choose? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 4 - Symbols and Abbreviations

### How to use symbols and abbreviations in note-taking

The average American says 90-150 words a minute when they are talking. So, it would be impossible to write every word being said. Taking notes is about writing as little as possible so that you can keep up with the speaker. One way to do this is by using symbols and abbreviations.

**Symbols** are when you replace a word with a sign or a drawing. You probably already use some types of symbols. For example, you probably write 5 instead of writing “five”. 5 is a symbol. We use it to replace a word. The most commonly used symbols come from math and science.

**Add some other symbols that you know.**

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |

Here are a couple of useful symbols to know that you may not be familiar with:

“– ditto marks – Ditto marks are used to indicate that the same thing is being said again,

♀ - woman – This symbol can be drawn to mean woman or women.

♂ - men – This symbol can be drawn to mean man or men.

**Example:**

6 in 10 ♂ in the USA owns an iPhone.

5 in 10 ♀ “ “ “ “ “ “ (By using ditto marks, the second part does not need to be written again.)

**Abbreviations** are words that have been shortened. For example, ELP is the English Language Program. Another common one is Mr. for Mister. As you are studying a subject, you will find that certain words or phrases are often repeated. You can create your own abbreviations to help you in your notes. Remember you are the only one who needs to be able to understand your notes.

**Add some other abbreviations that you know.**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Symbols and Abbreviations practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 1

**Directions:** Write the meaning for the following commonly used symbols.



\_\_\_\_\_

III

\_\_\_\_\_

\$

\_\_\_\_\_

#

\_\_\_\_\_

%

\_\_\_\_\_

=

\_\_\_\_\_

&

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 2

**Directions:** Write the meaning for the following abbreviations.

USA: \_\_\_\_\_

KSU: \_\_\_\_\_

etc.: \_\_\_\_\_

KS: \_\_\_\_\_

WWII: \_\_\_\_\_

adv: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 5 - Listening for Definitions and Key Words

### How to listen for definitions and key words

When listening to a talk, lecture, presentation, etc., there may be words that we may not know the meaning of. This even happens to native English speakers. If the word is unfamiliar, then you should use the skills that you use when reading. You should use context clues to help you figure it out. The context clues are using the topic, words, and phrases around the unfamiliar word to guess the meaning of the word. Examples are great context clues to help with understanding.

**Definitions** are meanings of words. Sometimes, if they are introducing a new word or concept, the speaker will define the word for you. To let you know that they are defining the word, they may signal with phrases like:

- let me explain that ...
- let me define that...
- that means ...
- ... is ...
- ... meaning ...

Add some other phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Key words** are words that are important to understand in order to understand the speaker's ideas. To let you know that a word is important, the speaker may signal that something is important by:

- repeat the word to make sure you heard it
- stop and write it on the board
- point it out in a power point presentation
- spell the word
- slow down
- explain or define the word
- ask if you know the word or the definition of the word

Add some other phrases or things that teachers do that let you know something is important:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Listening for definitions and key words practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the short talk and answer the following questions.



1. What is the topic of this talk? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did the speaker signal what the key words are?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are perennials?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two examples of perennials? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is one detail about peonies? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is one reason that you would want to plant perennials instead of annuals? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What are annuals? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What are two examples of annuals? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is an advantage of planting annuals? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)**

**Directions:** *Listen to the short talk and for each creature, write the description given.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_
2. Plesiosaur - \_\_\_\_\_
3. Masosaur - \_\_\_\_\_
4. Claosaurus - \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 3**

**Directions:** *Listen to the short talk from Exercise 2 again and answer the following questions.*

1. What is the topic? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which was the only dinosaur discovered in Kansas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long ago did the plesiosaur disappear? \_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter 6 - Numbers

### How to understand numbers that sound similar

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

When listening to numbers, there are two sets of number that sound similar, even to native speakers. These are the teens (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19) and the tens (30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90). Generally, for numbers ending in “teen”, the last syllable or the “teen” is stressed. It also usually has a clear “t” sound in the middle. For the tens, the first syllable is usually stressed, and the “t” is pronounced as a “d”. For example, 60 sounds like “sixdy”.

#### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Circle the number that you hear.

- |    |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 13  | 30  |
| 2. | 114 | 140 |
| 3. | 15  | 50  |
| 4. | 616 | 660 |
| 5. | 117 | 170 |
| 6. | 18  | 80  |
| 7. | 219 | 290 |

#### Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)

**Directions:** Circle the number that you hear.

- |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 13  | 30  | 33  | 6.  | 16  | 60  | 66  |
| 2. | 14  | 40  | 4   | 7.  | 17  | 70  | 7   |
| 3. | 414 | 440 | 444 | 8.  | 18  | 80  | 8   |
| 4. | 515 | 550 | 55  | 9.  | 718 | 780 | 788 |
| 5. | 16  | 60  | 6   | 10. | 19  | 90  | 91  |



**Exercise 3 – [click for Exercise 3 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Write in the numbers that you hear.

Kansas became a state on January \_\_\_\_\_, 1861. There are \_\_\_\_\_ states in the United States and Kansas was the 34<sup>th</sup> state. Kansas is divided into \_\_\_\_\_ counties and has \_\_\_\_\_ cities. Mt. Sunflower is the highest point in Kansas. It is \_\_\_\_\_ meters above sea level. Kansas has several state animals. The state mammal is the American Bison, commonly called a buffalo. Before Kansas was settled, there were over \_\_\_\_\_ million buffalo roaming Kansas. By the 1900's there were only about \_\_\_\_\_ buffalo left because they had been hunted. After this, the U.S. government began a program to protect and breed buffalo. The state bird is the western meadowlark. There are \_\_\_\_\_ other states that have the same bird: Wyoming and Nebraska. The state also has a state insect: the honeybee. In 1976, Kansas schoolchildren collected over \_\_\_\_\_ signatures to make the honeybee the state insect. There are \_\_\_\_\_ species of amphibians in Kansas, but only \_\_\_\_\_ are found throughout Kansas. The barred tiger salamander is one of them and was latest animal to be made a state animal.



## How to listen to fractions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

When you hear a fraction, you hear a whole number and an ordinal number; for example, one-third ( $1/3$ ). When the whole number is larger than 1, an “s” is added to the ordinal number; for example, two-thirds ( $2/3$ ). A larger amount like  $2\frac{1}{4}$  is read “two and one-fourth”. Make sure to listen for the word “and.” It’s very important because it separates the *whole number* from the **fraction**.

$1/2$  = one half

$1/3$  = one-third

$1/4$  = one-fourth

$1/5$  = one-fifth

$1/4$  = one quarter

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the following and write down the number that you hear.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_

14. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_\_\_

19. \_\_\_\_\_

20. \_\_\_\_\_



**Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)**

**Directions:** *Listen to the following story about Mary. Make careful notes below whenever you hear a fractional expression, so that you can answer the following questions.*

1. How many apples did Mary's mother take? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many apples were going to be used to make cider? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many apples did Mary donate to the after school program? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many apples did she take to work? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many apples did Mary keep for herself? \_\_\_\_\_

Space for notes or for you to calculate:



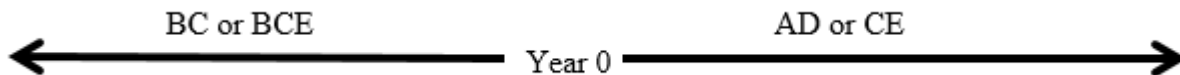
## How to listen for dates

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

When you hear dates, you will hear the day, month, date, year; for example, Friday, April 15, 2016. If the year is not included, then the date is said as an ordinal number; for example, April fifteenth. The year is usually said as two numbers. 1978 will sound like “nineteen seventy-eight”. 835 will sound like “eight thirty-five”. If it is in the first decade of the century, we will often add in an OH for the zero, so 1705 will sound like seventeen-oh-five.

This first century of the new millennium (the 2000’s) does not always follow these rules. We often hear people saying it more as a number. For example, 2002 may be said as “twenty-oh-two” or as “two thousand and two.” This is more common.

Sometimes you will hear letters after the dates. You may hear A.D., B.C., C.E., or BCE. These letters are to tell the listener which side of the timeline the year belongs to.



Why are there two choices? BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) are based off the Christian religion and refer to the birth of Jesus. As there are many people in the world who are not Christians, it was decided to make new labels that were not connected to any religion or specific country. So, BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (the Common Era) were created. You may hear or see either of these labels used depending on the speaker or text.

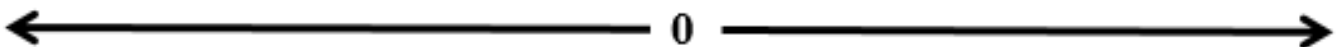
### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Write down the years that you hear.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 2

**Directions:** Write the years from exercise 1 in their correct spot on the timeline below.



**Exercise 3 – [click for Exercise 3 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Write down the dates that you hear. If you have extra time, you can look up each date and see what event happened on that date.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 4 – [click for Exercise 4 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Listen to the following short talk and write in the dates or numbers that you hear.

Can anyone tell me who said, “It all began with a dream and a mouse”? It was Walt Disney. Here are some of the Walt Disney Company’s major turning points. The first was Mickey Mouse. Mickey was first introduced on \_\_\_\_\_ in the cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*. The next major breakthrough was in \_\_\_\_\_ when the first full length animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* came out. It won Walt Disney an honorary Oscar at the \_\_\_\_\_ Academy Awards. You can see that it was actually one big Oscar and \_\_\_\_\_ little Oscars. The Walt Disney Company moved from just showing amazing worlds on screen to creating their own real life worlds when they opened Disneyland on \_\_\_\_\_. The company suffered a great loss when Walt Disney died on \_\_\_\_\_. Recently Disney has increased their profile by acquiring some other major companies. First, they acquired Pixar for \_\_\_\_\_ in January of 2006. This is the company that made *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Monsters, Inc.* Then, they acquired Marvel in \_\_\_\_\_. This means that Disney bought Spiderman, Iron Man, the Hulk, as well as all the other Marvel comic book characters. Finally, in \_\_\_\_\_ George Lucas sold Lucas Films and all the rights to *Star Wars* for \_\_\_\_\_, making Princess Leia a Disney princess.



## How to listen for decimals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Decimals are used for various reasons. Obviously, we use decimals to show parts of a whole number. When decimals are used to show part of whole number, you will hear the whole number first, then “point” and numbers after the “point” as individual numbers. So, you will hear 3.75 as “three point seven five”, not “point seventy-five”.

They are also used in currency (money) to show the number of dollars and the number of cents something cost. For example, you will hear \$3.12 as three dollars and twelve cents. Often when we are talking about how much something costs, we will say the dollars and cents as two separate numbers. So, \$21.37 will be said as “twenty-one thirty-seven”. Often when we are talking about how much something costs, we will say the dollars and cents as two separate numbers. So, \$21.37 will be said as “twenty-one thirty-seven”.

Finally, decimals are used to make larger numbers smaller. For example, there are 2.9 million people in Kansas. You will hear it as “two point nine million”, which equals 2,900,000.

Make sure to listen for the word “and”. It’s very important because it separates dollars from cents. Also, listen for the word “point.” It represents the decimal.

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the numbers and write down the number or dollar amount that you hear.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



**Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Listen to the following sentences about cell phones and write in the number or dollar amount that you hear. Remember to add a dollar sign (\$) if it is a dollar amount.

1. That iPhone only cost me \_\_\_\_\_ because it is an iPhone 5.
2. In the United States, Android is the top operating system because \_\_\_\_\_ percent of the smart phones in the U.S. use it.
3. In the United States, Apple is the most popular phone since \_\_\_\_\_ percent of smartphone users have an iPhone.
4. The display screens on the new iPhone 7 Plus and the Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge are \_\_\_\_\_ inches.
5. I bought a brand new iPhone 6 Plus for \_\_\_\_\_ after tax.
6. Josef decided to make monthly payments for his new iPhone 7. He is paying \_\_\_\_\_ a month for 24 months.





## Chapter 7 - Listing

### How to listen to lists

Often when speakers are giving examples, they will list many items in a row. Unless the speaker pauses between each item, it can be difficult to get each item down in your notes. The best idea is not to try to get down each item. If you do try to abbreviate things, you may not get most of them or forget what those abbreviations mean. Instead, try to write the ones that you remember and leave blanks or lines for the ones that you miss. This lets you know that you are missing information and allows you to keep the ones that you remember. Then after class, you can ask a classmate or the teacher about the words that you missed.

For example: many whales: blue, \_\_\_\_\_, humpback, beluga (the empty space means one thing is missing)

Another type of listing is what is discussed in reading class. You might hear a speaker discuss several of the same types of item. They might describe or define each item as well as give some examples and why each one is important. It is important to remember that these items are generally not main ideas. Usually the type or category is the main idea. These would be supporting details and examples.



## Listing practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 1- [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the short talk on vacations then write down the different items that you need to include in your budget.

What the things you need to include in your budget?

#1: \_\_\_\_\_

#2: \_\_\_\_\_

#3: \_\_\_\_\_

#4: \_\_\_\_\_

#5: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 8 - Patterns of Organization

### How to use patterns of organization in note-taking

Just like in writing and reading, there are patterns of organization in lectures. Why is it important to understand these different patterns in lectures? It is important for two reasons. The first reason is that because when we can hear the pattern, we can better understand the purpose of the lecture and it will help us better predict what might be said. When we know the purpose of the lecture, it makes it easier to know what the key words and points are.

The second reason is that it can help us to better take notes. We can more easily organize notes and also make better connections between the important ideas in the lecture.

There are many different patterns of organization. The most common patterns of organization are:

- listing
- sequence (chronological, process, etc.)
- comparison / contrast
- cause and effect
- problem / solution
- extended definition
- spatial

Just like in writing and reading, there is often a mix of patterns found in lectures. For example, there may be an extended definition used to give the definition of a cause in a cause and effect lecture. In fact, one main idea may be an extended definition, then next a comparison / contrast, and the next may be something else. The longer the lecture, the more likely it is to have a mix of patterns. This means that your notes may be a combination of styles in order to show the change in pattern.

One way to understand the pattern of organization is to listen for the language that the speaker uses. The language used to show the different patterns of organization is the same language used in both reading and writing.

#### Listing

Listing is very common in lectures. The speaker will give us a list of facts. In listing, the order of the facts, events, etc. does not make a difference. So, changing the order will not change the information. Language like “first, second, and third” is often used in these lectures. This language is not used to show importance; it is used to help organize the lecture and show the change from one idea to another. When taking notes on this pattern, using a simple outline works the best. This allows you to see the different facts and how they may be connected.

Add some other listing words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Sequence (chronological, process, etc.)

Sequence is very similar to listing; however, in this case, the order of events is important. If the lecture is a historical lecture, it is important to include the dates. The dates keep the information in order. If it is a process lecture, then it is best to number the events. This makes sure that you keep them in order. This is especially important in something like a chemistry experiment when having the steps out of order could cause an explosion. In this type of lecture, there may not be any main ideas, just the different steps.

<b>Chronological</b>	<b>Process</b>
1861 Kansas becomes a state	How to make macaroni and cheese
1863 Kansas State University founded	1 <sup>st</sup> – fill a pot with water
1894 Fairchild Hall built	2 <sup>nd</sup> – boil the water in the pot
	3 <sup>rd</sup> – once the water is boiling, add the macaroni noodles
	4 <sup>th</sup> – boil the noodles for 8-10 minutes until soft

There is language used to show that the speaker is talking about a sequence of events. This is often called sequential language. Some examples of sequential words include:

- first
- second
- next
- then
- finally
- January
- February

Add some other sequential words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Comparison / Contrast

One common pattern of organization is comparison/contrast. Speakers will often describe how two events are similar or different. While a speaker may mention a single similarity or difference within another pattern, you should remember that this is done to connect the new idea or object with one that is more common. It can only be comparison/contrast if this is the topic or a main idea of a lecture.

The language you hear to let you know that something is a comparison or contrast is the same language that you use when writing a comparison contrast essay or reading an article.

Some examples of comparison key words include:

- similar to
- the same as
- like
- just as
- both

Some examples of contrast key words include:

- different from
- on the other hand
- unlike
- whereas

Add some other comparison words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Add some other contrast words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

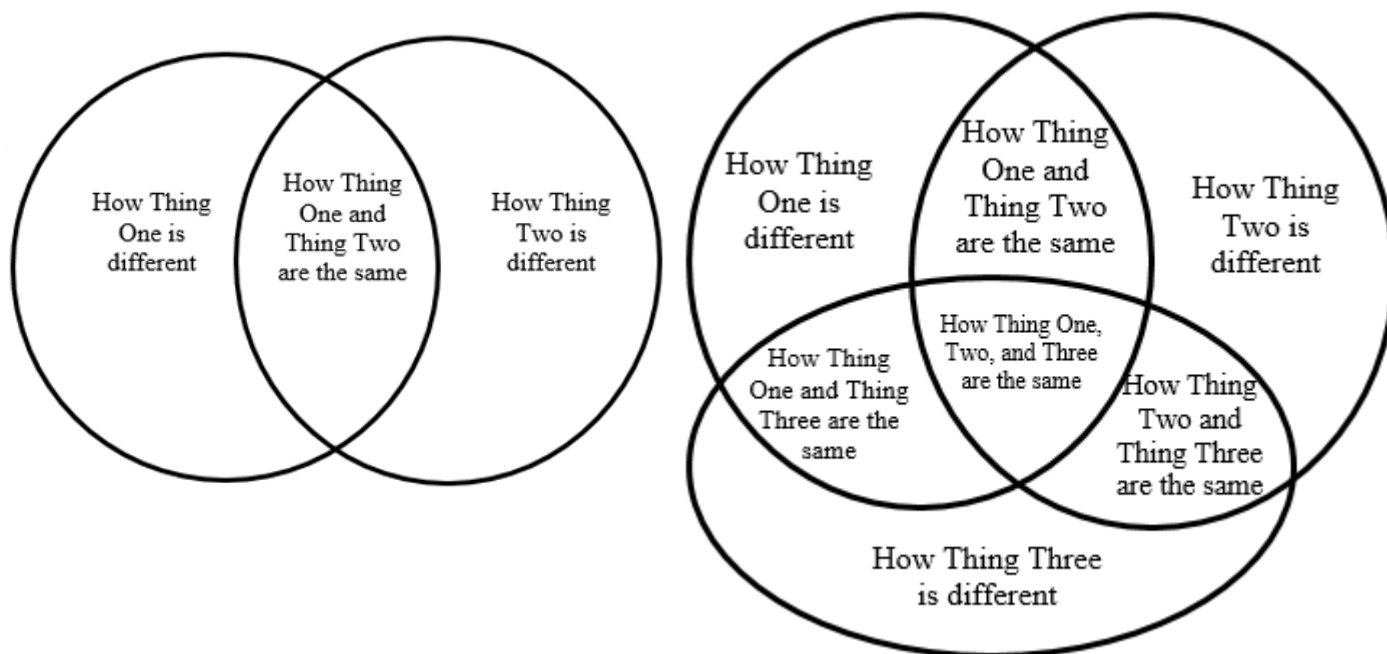
When you hear these key words, you may want to change the way you are taking notes. There are a couple of different ways that you can change your notes. One way is to use columns or a chart with the different items being compared in each column. It may be that you begin your notes with an outline but that one of the main ideas is comparing and contrasting two or more things. If this happens, you might change your notetaking style to show this change. This change in style will help you later when you are studying your notes. You may want to use columns or a simplified table in your notes to easily see the difference and similarities. You could also use Venn diagrams or mapping to show this.

Here's an example of how you can use a table. You would add more rows and/or columns depending on the number of main ideas and things being compared.

	Thing One	Thing Two
Main Idea #1		
Main Idea #2		

Another way is to use a Venn diagram.

Here's an example of how you can use Venn diagrams. Remember in a Venn diagram, you add a circle for each thing that is being compared and contrasted.



## Cause and Effect

Another common pattern of organization is cause and effect. Again, the language you hear to let you know that something is a cause and effect is the same language that you use when writing a cause and effect essay or see when reading an article.

Some examples of language to show cause and effect include:

- because
- the effect of this is/was
- reasons this happened

Add some other cause and effect words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

When taking notes about cause and effect, it is important to show the relationship between the items and to clearly show which is the cause and which is the effect. This can be done with arrows.

**Cause**



**Effect #1**



**Effect #2**

## **Problem / Solution**

Another common pattern of organization is problem/solution. Speakers will often begin by describing how the problem began or what caused the problem. So, it often begins by sounding like a cause and effect lecture. But, then then the speaker will continue on and explain how to solve the problem. They give you the solution. This is often found in a persuasion speech. The speaker wants to convince you that their solution is the best one to solve the problem. The language you hear is the same language that you see when reading an article trying to persuade you or that you use when writing a problem/solution essay or a persuasive essay.

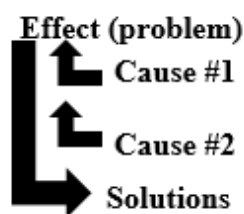
Some examples of problem/solution words include:

- the problem is
- the solution is
- the way to solve this problem is by
- the problem can be fixed by

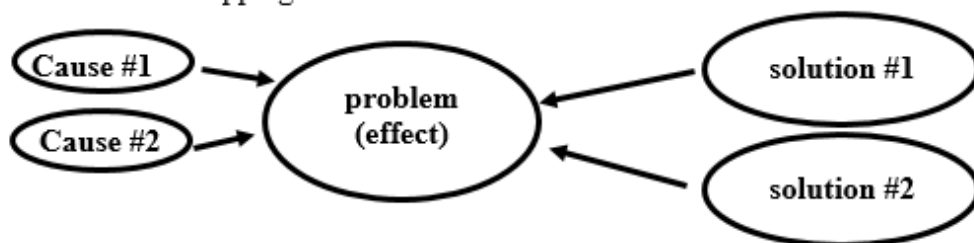
Add some other problem/solution words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

When taking notes about problem solution, it is important to show the relationship between the items and to clearly show which is the cause and which is the effect. This can be done with arrows.



It can also be with mapping



## Extended Definition

Another common pattern of organization is extended definition. Speakers will often use this to describe an event, a word, a person, or a place. It is similar to listing because it might be a list of facts about one thing and the order of the information is not important. The important thing here is to remember that it is an extended definition meaning that it is going to be more than just a sentence or two. It may include several examples. An informal outline works well for this pattern. The language used in an extended definition is less specific than in some of the earlier patterns of organization.

Some examples of definition words include:

- tell you about
- another fact about
- one more thing about

Add some other defining words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Spatial

Our final pattern of organization is spatial, which is about how items are arranged in space. You might use then when someone is explaining where to find a building in a city or how to arrange furniture in a room. This is not often used in academic lectures. One example of an academic lecture that may use this would be a military history course where the lecturer is explaining troop movements in a battle. The language used in this pattern include many prepositions of place in order to show where things are located in relationship to other things.

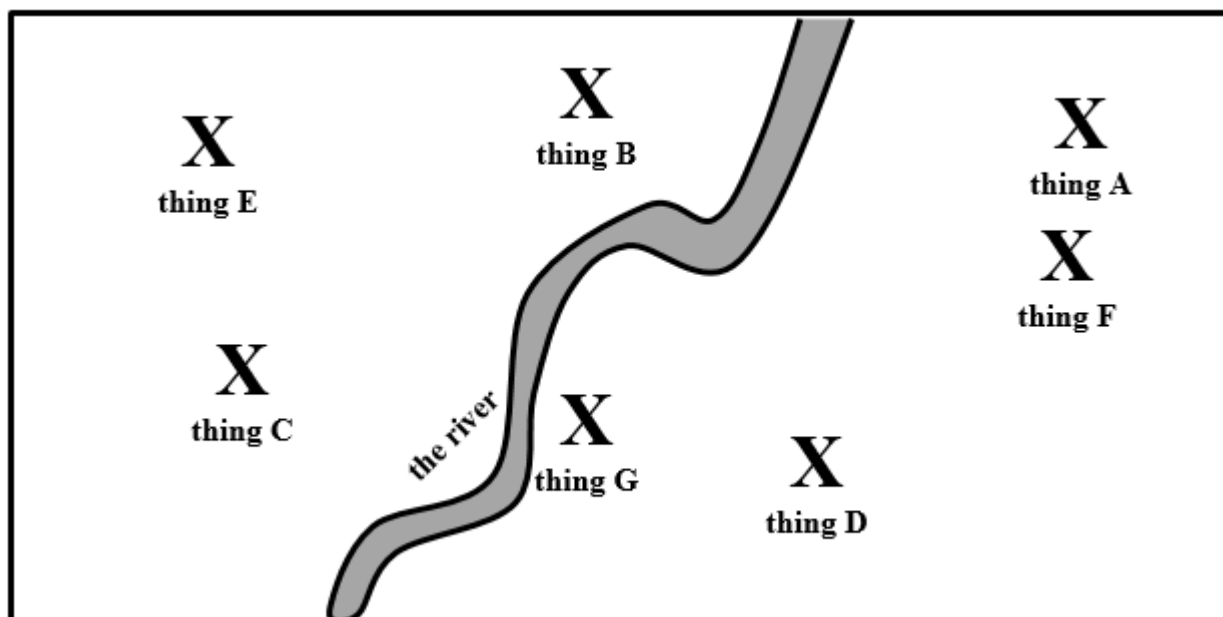
Some examples of spatial words include:

- next to
- to the left of
- across from

Add some other spatial words/phrases that you know:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Here taking notes with words might not be the best way. Instead, you may want to draw a picture. This will show you the layout of the items and give a better visual. If you are not very artistic, you might simply use labeled X's to where the different things are.



## Patterns of Organization Practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the following lecture introductions. For each introduction, decide what the topic is, which pattern of organization each lecture will follow, and what language/ key words the speaker uses to show pattern of organization.

Vocabulary				
marigolds	buds	whales	jellyfish	gorillas
monkeys	Johnson	President	tornado	

1. Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pattern of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pattern of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pattern of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pattern of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pattern of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Comparison/Contrast Practice

**Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Listen to the following short lecture and complete the chart

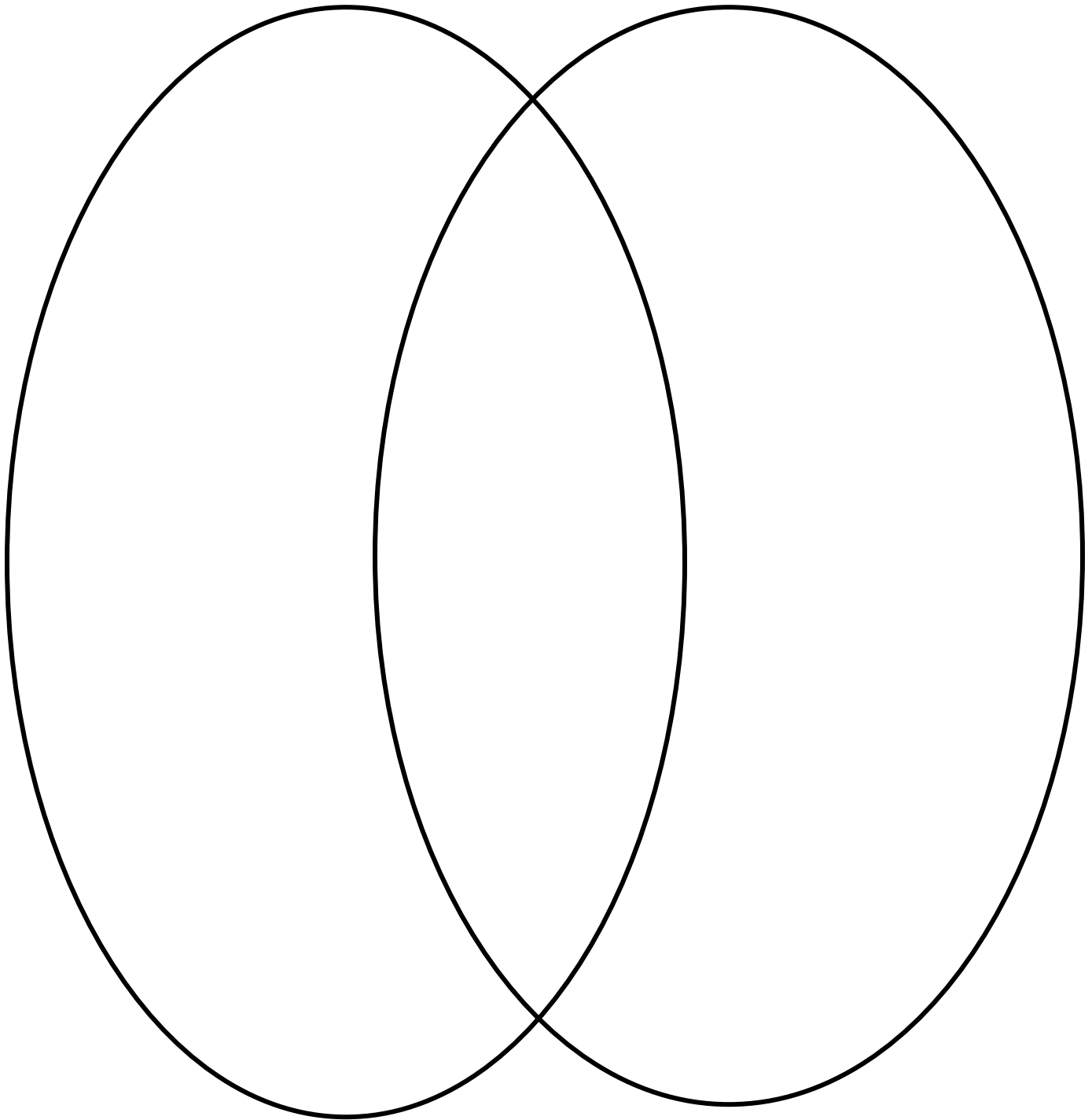
<b>Vocabulary</b>			
similarities	wizard	Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry	
Poseidon	Camp Half-Blood	prophecy	mystery
magical creatures		mortals	

[illegible]

Exercise 2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)

**Directions:** Using the short lecture from exercise 1, complete the Venn diagram.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_



## Process Practice

### Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the following short lecture and complete the informal outline.

Topic : \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - ❖ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ❖ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ❖ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
  - ❖ \_\_\_\_\_
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  - \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Cause and Effect Practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)**

**Directions:** Listen to the following short lecture and complete the informal outline

Vocabulary						
alley	Appalachia	Catskill	debris	horizontal	mountains	
Rocky	Sierra	tornado	updraft		vertical	weather

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Exercise 2

**Directions:** Use the boxes to draw pictures of a tornado forming

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## Exercise 3 – [click for Exercise 3 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the following questions. First, write down the question. Then, use your notes to answer the questions.

1. Question: \_\_\_\_\_  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Question: \_\_\_\_\_  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Question: \_\_\_\_\_  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Question: \_\_\_\_\_  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 9 - Identifying subtopics

### How to identify subtopics

As in writing, speakers will group their ideas together. The topic, of course, is the one word or short phrase that covers everything that has been written or discussed. It is the biggest idea. Then speaker will break down the topic into smaller topics. These are the next biggest ideas. Sometimes one or more of those main ideas gets broken down even further. These main ideas share the idea found in the main idea. When two or more main ideas share an idea, we call that bigger idea a subtopic. The subtopic still falls under the topic. The language used to introduce these subtopics is similar to the language used to introduce main idea. Here are some examples:

- So, we'll look at . . .
- As a part of that, I'm going to talk about ...
- We'll discuss . . .
- I'm going to break that down into . . .

#### Example #1

What you hear: Hello everyone. As you all know we have been learning about different types of Kansas wildlife. We have already completed our units on mammals and on fish. Today I want to start our unit Kansas birds. So, first I'm going to start by giving you some common characteristics that Kansas birds share. Then I'm going to focus on 3 birds that I expect you to be able to identify: the Western Meadowlark, the Robin, and Red-winged Blackbird.

**Directions:** Based on this introduction, identify each of the following:

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 Main Idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 Main Idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 Main Idea #3 \_\_\_\_\_



## Example #2

What you hear: Good morning everyone. Let's continue on with sports talk. So far, we have covered hockey, baseball, and basketball. Today, I want to talk about football that is American football. I'm going to start by talking about the players on each side of the ball, so offensive players and defensive players. Then I'm going to talk about three ways that you can score. These are touchdowns, field goals, and safeties.

**Directions:** Based on this introduction, identify each of the following:

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1-Main Idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1 Main Idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic # 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic # 2 -Main Idea #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic # 2- Main Idea #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic # 2 - Main Idea #3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Identifying subtopics practice

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise #1 – [click for Exercise 1 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the class introduction and identify each of the following

Vocabulary			
The Beatles	Elvis	glam rock	heavy metal
	punk	The Rolling Stones	

What is the topic of the class? \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1 – Main Idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1 – Main Idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #1 – Main Idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 – Main Idea #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 – Main Idea #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtopic #2 – Main Idea #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you take a class like this? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise #2 – [click for Exercise 2 audio](#)

**Directions:** Listen to the introduction and fill in the formal outline:

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

I. \_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

D. \_\_\_\_\_

