Be prepared

Don’t wait until you get to the lecture, tute or lab - or even out into the bush - to find out what’s what, why you’re there and what you’re looking for. As any good professional knows, don’t turn up to a meeting/session without a clue: anticipate what the session/meeting will be about.

Prepare for lectures

Before you go to the lecture:

• check out the lecture topic – imagine it is on the Australian Constitution
• if you are in first year, note your lecturer must cover some essential facts. So pre-read and take notes:
  — What is the Australian Constitution?
  — Why does it exist (for what purpose?)
  — How is it used?
  — When does it operate? (or not)
• Then focus pre-reading and note-taking on some of the key issues as they relate to the Australian Constitution (these kinds of questions will be the focus of tutorial):
  — What are the strengths of the Constitution in the context of the Australian Political System (your course/discipline)?
  — Does it achieve its purpose?
  — What are its weaknesses?
  — Is it a satisfactory document?

In this way when you get to the lecture you’ll at least:

• have a stronger understanding of what is being talked about
• confirm what you know
• feel more confident – less ‘behind’ or ‘lost’ or confused
• identify where you need to do more research/reading.

Prepare for tutorials

• Check out the tutorial readings: how do they connect with the lecture focus?
• If you are having trouble with managing all the reading, check the ASLC online reading materials and/or attend the ASLC StudySmart class on managing all the reading.
• As you do the readings keep in mind the kinds of tutorial questions you are being asked. The tutorial questions will focus on areas of ambiguity, uncertainty, controversy, debate – the grey areas. So most likely you will focus on questions such as:
  — What are the strengths of the Constitution in the context of the Australian Political System (your course/discipline)?
— Does it achieve its purpose?
— To what extent does it protect the Australian public’s democratic interests?
— To what extent was the Constitution responsible for the 1975 political crisis?
— Is it a satisfactory document? If not, how should it be amended? And so on.

There are no necessarily ‘clear cut’ straightforward answers to these questions. (That’s why we are still debating the 1975 crisis 30 years later!) So your need to think about how you would argue the case for a particular answer.

• Actively participate in tutorials
• After both your lectures and tutorial:
  — do some follow up reading to fill in any gaps in your understanding
  — consult with your lecturer/tutor about areas of difficulty
  — start pre-reading for the next lecture.

Prepare for laboratory sessions

Location
Find out which lab group you are in and its location (this may be allocated to you or you may select a particular lab group) - check your course outline, WebCT or course website for information.

Preparation
Come prepared with the right material (logbook, safety, clothing etc) and with your required reading or pre-lab problems completed. Some courses have lab manuals that provide an outline of course experiments. Find out how to obtain this manual and read it carefully.

Performance
Appreciate that the purpose of labs is to learn how to use scientific equipment, complete experiments, and record and interpret the results. Completing your logbook is important as a record of your experiments and will form part of your assessment for the course in some way. Learning how to keep scientific records takes time: seek out examples and follow the advice of your demonstrator.

Safety
Safety in the lab is paramount. There are safety rules that must be followed, including footwear and clothing requirements. Find out the safety rules and follow them as you may be working with dangerous chemicals. Always follow the directions of your demonstrator.

Risk Management for Chemicals Procedures

Prepare for field trips

Field trips and reports are variable in purpose and format, but will usually be about the spatial relationships among data. Time relationships, such as geological processes or cultural history, may also be important.

• Read, think and imagine before the trip – could you make up a checklist of features to look for at each site?
• Prepare to look, listen, think and take notes, photographs, make sketch maps/diagrams, while there.
• Prepare by clarifying the purpose of the field trip, reading preparatory material, and identifying the assessment task (report, group presentation etc).
• Prepare by developing questions you might ask:
  — What has been done? Why was it done?
— Has it succeeded? How do you know?
— What else could have been done? Why was it not done?
— What are the long-term prospects for the site?
— What constraints are identifiable?
— What principles emerge?

See also
