

Joshua Johnston

how to pay attention in class

Stop looking around. Nobody else ever looks around. Either look down or up, never side to side. You could look down more if you actually got out your notebook. Come on. Unzip the backpack and forget about how it's too loud and the zipper always catches on those dumb flaps. Now grab the big one, not one of the ten small ones that you keep in there in case you ever feel like writing—Moleskines, Field Notes, Five Stars, leave 'em all at the bottom. Ok. Now go to the divider for this class. And take good notes. Everybody says this generation is the worst at taking notes, but maybe that's one of the things they always say about generations, like the work ethic stuff and the respect stuff. Either way, they're probably right about you. No doubt this means your notes could do without all the jokes and quotes in the margins. Your sense of humor is too pop culture-heavy anyways. It's one of the reasons it's hard for you to make friends—they would have to have the exact same movie, music, and book schedule as you. Wait, what are you thinking about? Stop. Listen. Pay attention to the professor. Don't they say the best place to look is right above the area between their eyes? No, maybe that was just a bit on *The Office*. Look at the board. Write it down. Look back up at the professor. And fix your posture. You can't just lean back like that after writing something. You read all those body language books in 9th grade for nothing. You'll never solve a murder mystery and you'll never fist-fight villains with foible plans. You should've gotten in a fight in high school so you could put that unhealthy metaphor to bed like everyone else did. Speaking of heroes, pull up your pants; everybody behind you can see your Superman underwear—and you don't even like Superman, too many strengths; well, at least that's what that scene in *Kill Bill* said. That was so good. Shut up. Listen. He asked a question. Nobody's hands are up, maybe you could've answered it. Surely he'll repeat it. Nope. Watch the professor's face as some dude gropes for the answer after adding a stupid qualifier. You like this professor. Give him your time. Ask a question sometime. These things are important for your future. *My future? Damn.* The “best by” label on your ambitions to become an amalgam of Sherlock Holmes, MLK, Jesus, and Bob Dylan indicates that the possibility has already expired, but you don't pay attention to those anyway. Maybe it's time to start throwing away the old food in your fridge. But you aren't at home. You're on campus. In a class. Stop looking around. Write down what's on the board, and try to write legibly this time. STOP LOOKING AROUND. Nobody else thinks of their classmates like you're all surviving on the island from *Lost* together. Although, it is weird that that one girl two rows up and three to the left has looked over thrice now. Stop wondering if her favorite holiday is Labor Day or MLK Day—for all you know, it could just be the Fourth of July or something like that. Stop hoping that she knows the names of all the fallacies. Look up. Listen. He asked another question. Whatever it was, the answer is clearly not to think of that Arctic Monkeys song and tap the guitar melody with your right hand and the snare/kick with your left.