

# LISTENING SKILLS

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**SKILL  
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# LISTENING SKILLS



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**Listening Skills.** Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process. Listening is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood.

## **The Purpose of Listening**

There is no doubt that effective listening is an extremely important life skill. Why is listening so important?

Listening serves a number of possible purposes, and the purpose of listening will depend on the situation and the nature of the communication.

- To specifically focus on the messages being communicated, avoiding distractions and preconceptions.
- To gain a full and accurate understanding into the speakers point of view and ideas.
- To critically assess what is being said. (See our page on Critical Thinking for more).
- To observe the non-verbal signals accompanying what is being said to enhance understanding.
- To show interest, concern and concentration.
- To encourage the speaker to communicate fully, openly and honestly.
- To develop an selflessness approach, putting the speaker first.
- To arrive at a shared and agreed understanding and acceptance of both sides views.

Often our main concern while listening is to formulate ways to respond. This is not a function of listening. We should try to focus fully on what is being said and how it's being said in order to more fully understand the speaker.

**❖ Difference Between Hearing & Listening...**

<b><u>Hearing:</u></b>	<b><u>Listening:</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sound by the ear.</li><li>○ Hearing occurs with or without your consent</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Listening is an action where you choose to actively concentrate on what you hear.</li><li>○ In listening your brain processes the information into knowledge.</li></ul>

*"Listening is not the same as hearing and hearing is not the same as listening."*

The infographic features a light blue background with decorative floral elements on the left and right sides. The text is presented in a clean, sans-serif font, with the section headers in purple and the main title in a darker purple.

## **Listen for meaning**

Listening for meaning is a form of active listening. Active and attentive listeners not only pay attention to words, they also focus on the intent of each word—the message a word is intended to communicate. To decipher messages, first determine the central idea being communicated. Then pay close attention to anecdotes, explanations, and other details meant to clarify meaning.

## Adjust your note taking style to the lecture

Ineffective listeners often attempt to jot down every detail from a lecture. They are under the impression that a detailed outline equates to good notes. Students who utilize this strategy often get discouraged when they review their notes only to find the breadth, detail and lack of focus in their note-taking is confusing and leaves them unable to identify central themes and important topics.



## Concentrate and pay attention

People who struggle with listening often have a difficult time concentrating. Good listeners must work to develop the ability to concentrate and ignore distractions. This requires the ability to tune out personal worries, thoughts about family members and friends, and thoughts about upcoming activities.

## Be prepared

If you do not complete required reading or review notes from previous lectures prior to class, it is very difficult to process information and attentively listen to lectures. This is why you should never neglect to complete reading or other class assignments.

### ❖ Effective Listening...

Effective/Active Listening Is Actively Absorbing The Information Given To You By The Speaker, Showing That You Are Interested.

It Can Also Include Providing The Speaker With The Feedback, By Asking Relevant Questions So The Speaker Knows The Message Is Received.



## Focus on what's important

One of the keys of effective listening is the ability to concentrate on central ideas and main focuses. It is a mistake to only be concerned about facts and extemporaneous detail during a lecture. In other words, effective listeners focus on the stories or ideas behind the facts.

## Choose to be interested

Many people tune out lectures because they're bored or disinterested. As a result, they neglect to take notes on key concepts. Effective listeners become interested in the subject material, so they can process the information and pay attention to classroom lectures.



## Link Past and Current Learning

Human beings learn best when they place what they're learning in a context. One way of improving your listening skills is by actively engaging with the new material that you're learning.

## **Be Physically Ready**

It's easy to get into bad routines while you're in class. Your attention may start to drift and your mind may wander. You may find yourself staring out of a window or slouching in your chair. In a worst-case scenario, you may find that you're falling asleep as a lecture continues to go on. This is why being physically ready is an important part of listening. Being physically ready starts with good posture.

## **Engage with Your Instructor**

Part of listening includes understanding when you're not quite understanding a certain topic or concept. When this happens, it's important for you to ask questions to help clarify what is being said. All too often, students are too unsure or shy to ask questions. The truth is that most teachers are happy when students get involved and ask for clarification, so don't be afraid to ask your instructor for more clarification if you're not quite understanding a part of your lesson.

## **Don't Get Distracted**

An important part of staying focused and listening attentively is making sure you don't have any distractions. For this reason, you'll want to put away any unneeded materials when you're sitting in on lesson. In particular, you'll want to put away distracting devices, like mobile phones or tablets.



## **SIX KEY STEPS**

There is no doubt that effective listening is an extremely important life skill. Why is listening so important?

Listening serves a number of possible purposes, and the purpose of listening will depend on the situation and the nature of the communication.

Understanding the needs, feelings and fears of people at the end of their life requires you to take the time to listen carefully.

Active listening requires you to give the other person your full attention. A good active listener will hear more than the content of what is being said; they will hear the feelings and notice the tone of voice.

Minimal responses signal show the person that you are listening and interested. They including nodding your head, as well as affirming sounds such as "mm" and words such as yes.

Repeating two or three words from the person's last sentence is another technique that helps to show that you are listening and briefly summing up what the person has said is another way of demonstrating that you are both listening and understanding.

It may be extremely difficult for a person to reveal their deepest fears or worries. Sometimes a person might ask a question or make a comment while you are talking about something very ordinary, that brings a difficult subject up.

Knowing when not to talk can be just as important as knowing how and when to. When supporting a person at the end of life, there will be occasions when peace and quiet is needed.



# Be an **ACTIVE** listener!

Make  
**EYE**  
**CONTACT**



**FOCUS ON**  
what is being  
said



**FACE**  
the speaker



**TELL**  
**THE SPEAKER**  
if you understand  
or don't understand



**REPEAT**  
**BACK**  
what  
you  
heard



**NOD**  
your head



**ASK** questions



Wait for the  
speaker to  
stop **BEFORE**  
**SPEAKING**



Keep  
**HANDS** and  
**FEET STILL**



**IGNORE**  
distractions







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