

Institute of Sciences, Humanities & Liberal Studies

Department of Languages

Topic: Listening Skills

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"No communication is complete without listening" - Oxford

Meaning

Listening is the ability to receive a verbal message and decode it.

Hearing	Listening
1. Receiving of the sound waves without recognizing them.	1. Understanding what you hear.
2. It is one of the five senses and involuntary act.	2. voluntary act that leads to further learning.
3. Birds chirping, cars honking, etc	3. talks with elders/friends/parents and conversation within a class

Process of Listening

The act of listening can be classified in 5 parts. They are:

1. Receiving of a sound
2. Recognizing sounds into words
3. Interpreting those words in combination.
4. Understanding the meaning
5. Reacting

Types of listening

There are various types of active listening:

1. **Discriminative listening:** Listening with full concentration and distinguishing words from environmental noise.
2. **Comprehensive Listening:** Listening done with the purpose to learn and understand.
3. **Critical listening:** Listening done to judge the spoken words and content.

4. **Empathetic listening:** Listening which involves the indulgence of emotions and feelings.
5. **Casual/Superficial Listening:** listening done for pleasure and amusement.

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1. Features of a Good Listener:

Listening is an essential part of communication, and it is different from hearing. Being a good and patient listener helps you not only solve many problems at work or home, but also to see the world through the eyes of others, thereby opening your understanding and enhancing your capacity for empathy. In addition, you learn a lot from listening. Listening may seem a simple thing to do or acknowledge, doing it well, particularly when disagreements arise, takes sincere effort and lots of practice.

Place yourself in the other person's shoes. It is often too easy to wonder how what the other person is telling you impacts you. Active listening is not about inward thinking. Instead, you must look at the problems from the other person's perspective and actively try to see his or her point of view. It is not a good idea to consider yourself to be smarter than the speaker and assume that if you had been in his or her shoes, you would have seen your way through the problem much faster. Remember you have two ears and one mouth for a reason.

Create a conducive physical and mental space. Remove all distractions. Give all of your attention. Turn off cell phones. It may be easiest to arrange to talk somewhere that distractions will not occur. Quiet your mind and open yourself to whatever the person might have to say.

Stop talking and try to be silent. It might sound obvious and trite, but one of the biggest obstacles to listening, for many people, is resisting the impulse thoughts. Likewise, many think that empathy means sharing with the *listener* similar experiences that the listener has had. Both *can* be helpful, but they are easily abused. Put aside your own needs, and *wait* for the other person to talk at their own pace.

Follow and encourage the speaker with body language. Nodding your head will indicate you hear what the speaker is saying, and will encourage them to continue. Adopting body postures, positions and movements that are similar to the speaker (called mirroring) will allow the speaker to relax and open up more.

Practice the empathetic sounding back technique. At appropriate intervals during the conversation, it is helpful to "summarize and restate" and/or "repeat and encourage" the main points:

- *Repeat and encourage:* Repeat some of the things said by the speaker. At the same time, encourage the speaker with positive feedback. For example, you might say: "You didn't enjoy having to take the blame. I can see why." Go easy with this technique, however, because if you overwork it, it may come across as being patronizing.
- *Summarize and restate:* It is also very useful to summarize what the speaker is saying and restate it in your own words. This is a form of

reassuring the speaker that you have truly been listening to what he or she is saying. It also provides the speaker with an opportunity to correct any mistaken assumptions or misconceptions that may have arisen during the course of the conversation. This is an especially good technique to try when you find yourself getting frustrated or restless in your listening.

Do not interrupt with what you feel or think about the topic being discussed. Wait for another person to ask your opinion before interrupting the flow of discussion. Active listening requires the listener to shelve his or her own opinions temporarily, and await appropriate breaks in the conversation for summarizing. Abstain from giving direct advice. Instead, let him or her talk the situation out and find his or her own way. Besides, if he or she takes your advice and something goes wrong, he or she will be likely to blame you (whether he or she tells you or not).

Ask meaningful and empowering questions. Do not seek to probe or make the other person defensive. Rather, aim to use questions as a means by which the speaker can begin to reach his or her own conclusions about the concerns or issues being raised. Once you have shown empathetic listening, it is time to move into empowering listening by re-framing the questions that you ask the speaker. For example: "You didn't enjoy having to take the blame. But I cannot understand why you feel blamed rather than merely being asked not to do something that way." Wording the question in this manner presents the speaker with a need to respond directly to *your* lack of grasping something. In the process of doing so, the speaker should begin to move from a more emotional response to a more constructive response.

Wait for the person to open up. In the process of encouraging a constructive response, an active listener must continue to be patient and let the speaker acquire his or her full flow of thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Keep yourself in his or her shoes and try to estimate why he or she is in such a situation

Use Body Language to express your interest. Active listening involves the entire body and face--both yours and that of the speaker:

- *Your expression:* Look interested and meet the gaze of your speaker from time to time. Do not overwhelm the speaker by staring intently, but do reflect friendliness and openness to what you are listening to.
- *Read between the lines:* Always be alert for things that have been left unsaid or for cues that can help you gauge the speaker's true feelings. Watch the facial and body expressions of the speaker to try to gather all information you can, not just from the words. Imagine what kind of state of mind would have made you acquire such expressions, body language, and volume.
- *Speak at approximately the same energy level as the other person.* This way, he or she will know that the message is getting through and that there is no need to repeat.

Try to reassure the speaker that all is well. Whatever the conclusion of the conversation, let the speaker know that you have been happy to listen and to be a

sounding board. Make it clear that you are open to further discussion if need be, but that you will not pressure him or her at all. In addition, reassure the speaker of your intention to keep the discussion confidential. Offer to assist with any solutions if you have the ability, time, and expertise. Do not build up false hopes, however. If the only resource you can provide is to continue to be an active listener, make that very clear; in and of itself, this is a very valuable help to any person.

Be attentive:

- Use your face, voice and body to show that you are interested in what that person is talking about
- Listen with an accepting attitude
- Ask questions which show that you like to listen
- Use ideas and emotions to try to communicate to the person
- Test your understanding

Use encouraging words to show you are listening:

- Mmm,
- I see
- Right
- Uh, huh

Use nonverbal actions to show you pay attention to what is being said:

- Relaxed posture
- Head-nodding
- Facial expression
- Relaxed body expression

Use encouraging words that will invite them to continue:

- Tell me more
- Let's talk about it

Things to avoid:

- Do not interrupt
- Do not interrogate
- Do not try to think of your response in your head while listening
- Do not change the subject

Avoid phrases like:

- Are you sure?

- It's not that bad
- Sleep on it. You'll feel better tomorrow
- Do not be judgemental