

How to Listen Effectively

Listening is a skill which includes the active involvement and attention to what the speaker is saying. Hearing, on the other hand is the passive movement of sound into and out of the ear. Just because a person in a conversation is not talking does not necessarily mean he or she is listening.

Active listening involves the following:

- (a) Paying attention to what the speaker is saying.
- (b) Blocking out all distractions.
- (c) Thinking about what you have heard in order to make sense of it.

Here are some simple, practical strategies to help you become an active listener:

1. **Maintain eye contact.** This helps you avoid distractions. Look at the other person while he or she speaks. It demonstrates your attention and it helps keep your mind from wandering.
2. **Hear the speaker out.** Follow the speaker's line of thought from beginning to end. Active listening means involvement with the speaker, paying attention, and following the line of thought of the speaker. It also means making sure you understand what has been said.
3. **Give listening your full attention.** Listening is a full-time, full-attention job. You cannot share it with other things. When listening to another person, we often interrupt with our opinions, suggestions and inappropriate comments. Try waiting for the person to complete his or her thought before asking questions.
4. **Look for patterns of organization.** Find ways people use to put fact and events in order. This allows you to follow the line of thought better. You will know what to listen for and in some ways you can predict what will come next.
5. **Be aware of clue words.** Listen for words like first, then, finally, reason, result, alike and different. These are special words that signify that a particular pattern is being used. For example, find a chronological pattern (the order events happen in time), cause and event pattern, or the compare and contrast pattern (comparing things that are alike or different).
6. **Ask the speaker questions.** This will clear up any confusion you may have encountered while listening and will allow the speaker to know how well his or her lecture was received. The following questions can be asked: *Can you explain that in more detail? Can you give another example? What are the alternatives?*

Good Luck!

Ellis, David B (1985). **Becoming a Masters Student** (p. 210-211)

The following **videotape** is available for you to view:” **How to listen effectively.**”