
LISTENING

Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing is a physical act while listening involves so much more—which is why mastering this skill is crucial to the success of all people, be they students or not. Listening is following, understanding, and processing what one hears; it is hearing with a purpose. Be assured, although sometimes it may not seem like it, every instructor has a specific order in which they deliver their lectures. You may have to dig deep to find any patterns, but once you do, listening becomes easier and more enjoyable.

Remember: listening is the foundation for learning.

“I never learned anything while I was talking.”—Larry King

Triple-A-Listening

Good listening is built on three basic skills: attitude, attention, and adjustment. These skills are known collectively as Triple-A-Listening.

Maintain a Constructive Attitude: A positive attitude paves the way for open-mindedness. Refrain from making assumptions about the lecture or teacher that will prevent you from recalling the speaker’s key points.

Strive to Pay Attention: You must focus your attention on the lecture as opposed to the act of concentrating. When you actively listen to a lecture, the words enter your short-term memory where they are processed into ideas. Attentive listening assures that the ideas are processed.

Cultivate a Capacity for Adjustment: Although some speakers clearly indicate what they intend to cover in their lectures, you need to be flexible enough to follow a lecture regardless of the direction it may take. Leaving room in your notes will make you a better listener and a better note-taker.

The Ten Commandments of Good Listening

- 1. Stop Talking**...You cannot listen while you are talking. Polonius said: "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."
- 2. Put the Speaker at Ease**...Help him/her feel he is free to talk.
- 3. Make Eye Contact**...Look and act interested. Don't ignore him/her while he talks. Listen to understand rather than to reply.
- 4. Remove Distractions**...Don't doodle, tap your foot, or shuffle papers.
- 5. Empathize with Him/Her**...Try to put yourself in his/her shoes to better see his point of view.
- 6. Be Patient**...Allow plenty of time, don't interrupt, and don't start for the door while he/she is talking.
- 7. Hold Your Temper**...An angry listener gets the wrong meaning from words. "He who angers you, conquers you."
- 8. Go Easy on Argument and Criticism**...This puts him/her on the defensive. He or she may clam up or become angry.
- 9. Ask Questions**...This encourages him/her and shows that you are listening. It also helps develop further points.
- 10. Stop Talking**...This is the first and last commandment because all the others depend on it. You simply can't actively listen while you are talking!