

Active Listening Skills

Freshman Seminar, Ellet High School

Listening Defined: the physical reality of hearing what another person says AND a suspenseful waiting that reflects psychological involvement with that person.

We listen more during any day than we do any other activity, yet we never take a formal course in listening! Listening is NOT a passive activity. If you are a good listener, you remain ACTIVELY engaged.

College students spend approximately 14 hours per week in class listening to lectures. High school has even more hours a week geared toward listening in class. Here are some tips to help improve your listening.

Maintain eye contact with the instructor. Eye contact keeps you focused and involved in the lecture.

Focus on content, not delivery. Don't focus on how people talk...focus on what they are saying! Have you ever counted the number of times a person says, "Um." If so, you weren't focusing on content.

Know what your goal is in listening. Are you looking for particular information? Listen for it. Practice these skills.

Avoid emotional involvement. Don't take it personal...it's just business. When you are too emotionally involved in listening, you tend to hear what you want to hear--not what is actually being said. Remain objective and open-minded.

Ask questions. This technique keeps you focused and listening.

Use Reflective statements. Rephrase what you thought you heard and ask for clarifications if you are unsure of the information. "You are saying that..."

Avoid distractions. Know what causes you to become distracted, and then work hard to avoid those distractions.

Treat listening as a challenging mental task. Concentrate on what is said so that you can process the information into your notes. In your mind consider how YOU would repeat this information.

Stay active by asking mental questions. Ask yourself, "What key point is the teacher making? How does this fit with what I know from previous lectures? How is this lecture organized?"

Use non-verbal communication. Lean forward, and give feedback (nodding, etc.) when you agree with the information being said.

Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought. You can think faster than the lecturer can talk. That's one reason your mind may tend to wander. Work on anticipating what the teacher is going to say. Your mind does have the capacity to listen, think, write and ponder at the same time, but it does take practice.

There is a book, **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**, which identifies what makes people successful. Good listening skills are one of the seven habits! Your goal should be to obtain this skill. Since we listen more than anything else, you will certainly become a more effective and successful student!

Works Cited

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