

How Are Your Listening Skills?

For each of the statements below, keep track of whether it is “always,” “sometimes,” or “rarely/never” true of you. Note: Speaker refers to professors and classmates.

1. I allow speakers to complete sentences before I speak.
2. I make sure I understand the other’s point of view before I respond.
3. I listen for the speaker’s important points.
4. I try to understand the speaker’s feelings.
5. I attempt to frame my response before I speak.
6. I consider the solution before speaking.
7. I am in control, relaxed, and calm when listening.
8. I use listening noises such as “yes” and “I see.”
9. I take notes when someone else speaks.
10. I listen with an open mind.
11. I listen even if I find the other person boring.
12. I listen even if I have doubts about the speaker’s knowledge.
13. I am patient when I listen.
14. I ask questions.
15. I do not allow distractions to bother me.

Scoring:

14-15 “always” answers: You are an excellent listener.

11-13 “always” answers: You are a good listener but could improve.

7-10 “always” answers: You are a fair listener and can thus improve specific behaviors.

4-6 “always” answers: You are a poor listener. Work consciously to improve specific areas.

Fewer than 4 “always” answers: Are you sure you are listening?

10 steps toward effective listening skills

1. Be prepared! Use the syllabus to understand how new material fits into the context of what you have already learned, and think about why it is important for your education.
2. Pay attention to opening remarks that outline the content of the lecture.
3. Remember that every speaker has a unique lecture style, and every subject has its own focal point. Be flexible.
4. Identify your personal biases to increase your self-awareness and prevent you from missing vital information. A positive, accepting open mind is more likely to absorb information than one that is resistant to new ideas. Motivate yourself to listen by empathizing with the speaker.
5. Make eye contact with speakers, which will help you concentrate on what they are saying.
6. Pay attention to content and not delivery.
7. Summarize and organize your thoughts. Make notes of important questions that occur to you and of facts or statistics relevant to the question. This will encourage you to ask thoughtful, clarifying, or technical questions at the end of the lecture.

8. Ignore and do not cause interruptions. Stay alert physically by sitting at the front of the class, sitting up straight in your chair, and shifting slightly in your seat if you begin to feel drowsy. Bring a drink to keep you physically active if drowsiness is a regular problem.

9. Hold your questions until you are sure the speaker has come to the end of the topic and your question has not been answered. If you are paying close attention, you can minimize embarrassment by not asking the speaker to repeat things already covered or by asking unrelated or unnecessary questions.

10. After the lecture, make a note of what you found easy to recall even without your notes, and what was very difficult to remember despite your notes. This will help you recognize which subjects you find stimulating and easy to remember, and which ones you must pay extra attention to in order to succeed. Obviously, a dense fact-filled lecture is likely to require more concentration than one in which anecdotes are told to illustrate points.

Keys to good listening: TQLR

- * Tune in
- * Question
- * Listen
- * Review

Effective vs. ineffective listeners

- x Find or create something to arouse and sustain interest vs. label the subject boring.
- x Focus on the message rather than the speaker vs. criticize the speaker's delivery.
- x Listen to the entire message before passing judgment vs. let disagreement distract them.
- x Look for major ideas and relationships between ideas vs. listen only for the facts.
- x Make notes reflecting the lecture's organization vs. try to outline everything.
- x Create internal summaries of the lecture vs. evade difficult material.
- x Devote their full attention to the speaker vs. fake attention to the speaker.
- x Listen with a purpose vs. are easily distracted.
- x Ask meaningful questions that stimulate further discussion vs. ask no questions.