



Effective Listening

Did you know...

...Listening is a critical skill for communication in relationships, on the job, and in school.

...Most people think they are listening if they aren't talking. Often they are preparing what they will say, rather than focusing on the speaker.

...Thoughts move about four times faster than speech. In other words, people can think about what is being said faster than a person can talk.

...Most people do not understand the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is an awareness of sound. Listening is a skill that takes practice to master. Listening is making a conscious effort to pay attention to what is being said.

...Some people have trouble listening because they think they will lose control of the conversation.

...Listening is a learned skill that improves with practice.

...Silence is golden when you are listening.

Demonstrate these behaviors to master the skill of listening.

Nonverbal Behaviors

- Stop what you are doing and give your full attention to the person speaking. Try to keep your mind from wandering to another topic.
- Stand or sit in a relaxed way and look at the person.
- Listen for the message the speaker wants to communicate, not just the words.
- Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk.

Verbal Behaviors

- Summarize by paraphrasing what you hear the person say. Use your own words to restate what he or she said. By summarizing, you show the person that you've been listening to the message he or she is trying to communicate.
- Ask questions to express continued interest, to help you understand better or to learn more about what the speaker is saying.
- Make comments on what the person says. Stick with the same topic and keep the focus on the speaker rather than a similar experience you have had.

Tips

- Keep an open mind. Wait until the speaker is finished before deciding if you agree, disagree, or have no opinion. This may be hard to do if the speaker is complaining about something you did or said. However, if you wait and listen attentively, the speaker will feel like his or her message has been heard.
- Calm down if you have strong feelings about what the person is saying.
- Be polite and wait until it's your turn to speak. Remember, it's your job to focus on the speaker right now.
- Take time to think before you speak.

Your Assignment

- Create a teaching tool that explains and demonstrates your assigned skill.
- Your presentation will be evaluated on:
 - thorough and accurate explanation of the skill.
 - accurate and clear demonstration of the skill.
- You have up to five minutes to present your skill.
- Option: Research additional data on the skill and note the source.