

# Improving Listening Skills

How to be a Better Listener

*Students spend 12-14 hours per week in class listening, or at least hearing (which is not the same thing), to lectures in class.*

*How can you get more out of these hours?*

**Here's a checklist of strategies:**

## **1. Maintain eye contact.**

Watch for non-verbal cues, such as gestures and expressions. If the speaker is excited about the topic try to find out why by watching closely!

*Issues you may have with maintaining eye contact:* \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Focus on content of lecture, not the mannerisms of the professor.**

Repeated words, odd gestures, mannerisms, strange style of dress can all be funny, but when you are watching those things, are you really listening to what the speaker is saying?

*Issues you may have with listening without judgment:* \_\_\_\_\_

## **3. Avoid distractions.**

What distracts you? Other students? Shuffling papers? Hot or cold room? Pay attention to what causes you to lose your focus, and then take steps to correct those things, to the best of your ability. Don't make excuses, make changes!

*Issues you may have with avoiding distractions:* \_\_\_\_\_

## **4. Treat listening as a challenging mental task.**

Listening requires effort and energy, so really paying attention and listening is a challenging mental task. Treat it as such! Find ways to actively listen.

*Issues you may have with actively listening:* \_\_\_\_\_

## **5. You can think faster than the speaker can speak – use that to your advantage.**

That's right, even the fastest talkers can't talk as fast as you can think! So use that time wisely by making comparisons to previously-learned information, to anticipate what the speaker may say next, to write down questions to ask, etc.

*Issues you may have with thinking while listening:* \_\_\_\_\_

## How well do you listen?

Choose the number closest to the statement that is most like you.

- |  |           |                             |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 1. I listen more than I talk               | 5 4 3 2 1 | I talk more than I listen   |
| 2. I tend to look at others in the eyes    | 5 4 3 2 1 | I don't use eye contact     |
| 3. I mostly use the word "you"             | 5 4 3 2 1 | I mostly use the word "me"  |
| 4. I give too much advice                  | 5 4 3 2 1 | I try not to give advice    |
| 5. I don't do other things while listening | 5 4 3 2 1 | I multitask while listening |
| 6. I give positive comments                | 5 4 3 2 1 | I give negative comments    |
| 7. I enjoy silence                         | 5 4 3 2 1 | I don't like silence        |
| 8. I wait before I speak                   | 5 4 3 2 1 | I tend to interrupt others  |

Draw a vertical line connecting all the numbers you choose.

How does your line look? Is it straight or crooked? Is it near the numbers 4 and 5, or more near the numbers 1 and 2? Good listeners should have circled mostly number 5s.

These are the positive ways of listening.

## Distractions

What distracts you?

Self/Internal (Hunger, Headaches, Tired, etc.)

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Outside Influences/External (Talking, Sniffing, Keyboard Typing, etc.)

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Technology (Cellphone, Laptop, iPod, etc.)

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