

Listening on the Job

Most people spend at least half of their communication time listening. This most used communication skill is not only crucial in interpersonal communication but it is also must in organisation communication and helps in determining success in education and careers. Business written Kevin Murphy says “the better you listen, the luckier you get so take time to listen”.

Recent studies show that personnel at all levels spend about 32.7% of their time, listening. Whereas, speaking takes up 25.8% of their time and writing 22.6% however, senior professionals spend even more time listening. Poor listening can cause innumerable mistakes. Listening helps employees to update their facts, skills, attitudes and also improve their spoken skills.

Levels and Types of Listening-

1. **Discriminative Listening:** It involves an attempt to distinguish one sound from all others. Stopping work to determine whether the phone is ringing is an example of this listening. We learn how to discriminate among sounds at an early stage.
2. **Comprehensive Listening:** It involves an attempt to understand a speaker’s message in totality and to interpret the meaning precisely. This kind of listening is generally

practiced in classrooms, where we must remember what has been taught and rely upon it for future use.

3. **Critical Listening:** When a person wants to sift through what he has heard and come to a decision he must listen critically. This involves judging the clarity, accuracy and reliability of the information evidence and also being alert to emotional appeals. Examples: Professionals like doctors and judges do this listening.

4. **Active Listening:** It is also called empathized listening or supportive listening. Empathy means putting yourself into other person's shoes and trying to understand his perspective. When we listen actively, we encourage the speaker to express himself completely. It involves responding to the emotional content apart from only the verbal message. An active listener is alert to all clues and carefully observes the non-verbal behaviour of the speaker to get a complete picture. Eg. Counsellors.

Guidelines for effective listening

1. Use attentive body language: The posture and position of body influence both the ability to listen and how you are perceived as a listener. An attentive listener should show confidence in his/her body language.
2. Concentration: Effective listening requires focusing on what is being said. While listening, we should not get distracted by noise or any kind of disturbances. We should be concentrated to what the speaker is speaking.
3. Listen more, speak less: For effective listening, it is very important to listen carefully rather than interrupting the speaker again and again. One should listen more and carefully rather than speaking more and immediately deriving conclusions.
4. Have an open mind: It means listen without judging the other person or criticizing the things that he/ she tells you. It is always better to be open minded to other persons view and ideas through which we may get to know a lot. Apart from this, we cannot just stop listening to someone just because we dislike his/ her appearance, thought etc.
5. Don't jump to conclusion: Wait until you hear what the speaker has to say, before jumping or deriving conclusions. A good listener should not be biased and should not judge or decide something without having all the facts and reach to unwanted conclusions.

6. Show Understanding: A good listener deliberately listens to the speaker and understands his/ her feelings. He concentrates totally on the facts and evaluates the facts. A good listener should be projective (i.e. one who tries to understand the views of the speaker) and empathic (i.e. tries to understand the speakers perspective).

❖ Short Note on: Listening, Computerization and Note Taking

Good note taking involves effective listening that includes concentrating on selecting, summarizing, evaluating what is being said by the speaker. Listening requires you not only to hear what is being said but to understand as well.

Note taking is the practice of recording information captured from another source. By taking notes, the writer records the essence of the information, freeing their mind from having to recall everything.

Note taking is the practice of writing pieces of information, in an informal and unstructured manner. It generally involves writing down most of what you hear or read without processing the information.

Note taking is taken as a passive approach to study and learning.

Listening Barriers

Effective listening is the foundation of communication. But studies show that most of the people remember only 25.50% of what they hear. In a service industry, quality customer service including ability to anticipate, respond and awareness of users' needs depend upon careful listening. However, there are some barriers in effective listening:

1. **Distractions:** Computers, televisions, mobiles, busy surroundings can causes miss-opportunities of effective listening.
2. **Cultural Differences:** Many cultures have different ideas of polite listening. Examples- maintaining an eye contact is must in some cultures, whereas can be offensive in others and this can cause occasional misunderstandings.
3. **Selective Listening:** Sometimes we heat the part that fits our expectations rather than listening completely. This is called filtering out view points and changing the interpretation of the message which again acts as a barrier.
4. **Being Judgemental:** Our preconceived judgements can harm the ability to listen, even before a conversation begins. We are better listeners only when we make an honest effort to understand things with an open mind.
5. **Defensiveness and Assumptions:** Not listening something just because it might harm our personality traits or may contradict our point of view is called defensiveness and is

definitely one of the barriers in effective listening. In addition to that, when we assume a speaker's message based on his physical appearance, language, cast and other such factors, we kick our ability to listen truly and honestly.

Most of us are able to relate to some or all of these factors through our own experiences. So all we need to do is cut down the barriers and start effective listening.



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