

The following materials discuss different aspects of the development of listening skills. These notes can be used to develop training lessons for training Teen Challenge staff and students.

Listening Skills

You probably spend more time using your listening skills than any other kind of skill. Like other skills, listening takes practice.

What does it mean to really listen?

Real listening is an active process that has three basic steps.

- **Hearing.** Hearing just means listening enough to catch what the speaker is saying. For example, say you were listening to a report on zebras, and the speaker mentioned that no two are alike. If you can repeat the fact, then you have heard what has been said.
- **Understanding.** The next part of listening happens when you take what you have heard and understand it in your own way. Let's go back to that report on zebras. When you hear that no two are alike, think about what that might mean. You might think, "Maybe this means that the pattern of stripes is different for each zebra."
- **Judging.** After you are sure you understand what the speaker has said, think about whether it makes sense. Do you believe what you have heard? You might think, "How could the stripes to be different for every zebra? But then again, the fingerprints are different for every person. I think this seems believable."

Tips for being a good listener

- Give your full attention on the person who is speaking. Don't look out the window or at what else is going on in the room.
- Make sure your mind is focused, too. It can be easy to let your mind wander if you think you know what the person is going to say next, but you might be wrong! If you feel your mind wandering, change the position of your body and try to concentrate on the speaker's words.
- Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk. Speakers appreciate having the chance to say everything they would like to say without being interrupted. When you interrupt, it looks like you aren't listening, even if you really are.
- Let yourself finish listening before you begin to speak! You can't really listen if you are busy thinking about what you want say next.
- Listen for main ideas. The main ideas are the most important points the speaker wants to get across. They may be mentioned at the start or end of a talk, and repeated a number of times. Pay special attention to statements that begin with phrases such as "My point is..." or "The thing to remember is..."
- Ask questions. If you are not sure you understand what the speaker has said, just ask. It is a good idea to repeat in your own words what the speaker said so that you can be sure your understanding is correct. For example, you might say, "When you said that no two zebras are alike, did you mean that the stripes are different on each one?"
- Give feedback. Sit up straight and look directly at the speaker. Now and then, nod to show that you understand. At appropriate points you may also smile, frown, laugh, or be silent. These are all ways to let the speaker know that you are really listening. Remember, you listen with your face as well as your ears!

Thinking fast

Remember: time is on your side! Thoughts move about four times as fast as speech. With practice, while you are listening you will also be able to think about what you are hearing, really understand it, and give feedback to the speaker.

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/index.html>

Read more: [Speaking & Listening Skills http://www.infoplease.com/homework/listeningskills1.html#ixzz1ObR9DYI](http://www.infoplease.com/homework/listeningskills1.html#ixzz1ObR9DYI)

Listening Skills (How to Listen)

The average student spends about 14 hours per week in class listening (or perhaps I should say "hearing"--there is a difference!) to lectures. See if you can improve your listening skills by following some of the strategies below:

- **Maintain eye contact with the instructor.** Of course you will need to look at your notebook to write your notes, but eye contact keeps you focused on the job at hand and keeps you involved in the lecture.
- **Focus on content, not delivery.** Have you ever counted the number of times a teacher clears his/her throat in a fifteen minute period? If so, you weren't focusing on content.
- **Avoid emotional involvement.** When you are too emotionally involved in listening, you tend to hear what you want to hear--not what is actually being said. Try to remain objective and open-minded.
- **Avoid distractions.** Don't let your mind wander or be distracted by the person shuffling papers near you. If the classroom is too hot or too cold try to remedy that situation if you can. The solution may require that you dress more appropriately to the room temperature.
- **Treat listening as a challenging mental task.** Listening to an academic lecture is not a passive act--at least it shouldn't be. You need to concentrate on what is said so that you can process the information into your notes.
- **Stay active by asking mental questions.** Active listening keeps you on your toes. Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you listen. What key point is the professor making? How does this fit with what I know from previous lectures? How is this lecture organized?
- **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. All the above suggestions will help you keep your mind occupied and focused on what being said. You can actually begin to anticipate what the professor is going to say as a way to keep your mind from straying. Your mind does have the capacity to listen, think, write and ponder at the same time, but it does take practice.

ptreuer@d.umn.edu

Page URL: http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/strat/ss_listening.html

Page Coordinator: Paul Treuer

Tips to Effective & Active Listening Skills

Written by [http://powertochange.com/blogposts/author/scortright/Susie Michelle Cortright](http://powertochange.com/blogposts/author/scortright/Susie%20Michelle%20Cortright)

Listening makes our loved ones feel worthy, appreciated, interesting, and respected. Ordinary conversations emerge on a deeper level, as do our relationships. When we listen, we foster the skill in others by acting as a model for positive and effective communication.

In our love relationships, greater communication brings greater intimacy. Parents listening to their kids helps build their self-esteem. In the business world, listening saves time and money by preventing misunderstandings. And we always learn more when we listen than when we talk.

Listening skills fuel our social, emotional and professional success, and studies prove that listening is a skill we can learn.

The Technique. Active listening is really an extension of the Golden Rule. To know how to listen to someone else, think about how you would want to be listened to.

While the ideas are largely intuitive, it might take some practice to develop (or re-develop) the skills. Here's what good listeners know — and you should, too:

- 1. Face the speaker.** Sit up straight or lean forward slightly to show your attentiveness through body language.
- 2. Maintain eye contact**, to the degree that you all remain comfortable.
- 3. Minimize external distractions.** Turn off the TV. Put down your book or magazine, and ask the speaker and other listeners to do the same.
- 4. Respond appropriately** to show that you understand. Murmur (“uh-huh” and “um-hmm”) and nod. Raise your eyebrows. Say words such as “Really,” “Interesting,” as well as more direct prompts: “What did you do then?” and “What did she say?”
- 5. Focus solely on what the speaker is saying.** Try not to think about what you are going to say next. The conversation will follow a logical flow after the speaker makes her point.
- 6. Minimize internal distractions.** If your own thoughts keep horning in, simply let them go and continuously re-focus your attention on the speaker, much as you would during meditation.
- 7. Keep an open mind.** Wait until the speaker is finished before deciding that you disagree. Try not to make assumptions about what the speaker is thinking.
- 8. Avoid letting the speaker know how you handled a similar situation.** Unless they specifically ask for advice, assume they just need to talk it out.
- 9. Even if the speaker is launching a complaint against you, wait until they finish to defend yourself.** The speaker will feel as though their point had been made. They won't feel the need to repeat it, and you'll know the whole argument before you respond. Research shows that, on average, we can hear four times faster than we can talk, so we have the ability to sort ideas as they come in...and be ready for more.
- 10. Engage yourself.** Ask questions for clarification, but, once again, wait until the speaker has finished. That way, you won't interrupt their train of thought. After you ask questions, paraphrase their point to make sure you didn't misunderstand. Start with: “So you're saying...”
As you work on developing your listening skills, you may feel a bit panicky when there is a natural pause in the conversation. What should you say next? Learn to settle into the silence and use it to better understand all points of view.

Ironically, as your listening skills improve, so will your aptitude for conversation. A friend of my partner once complimented me on my conversational skills. I hadn't said more than four words, but I had listened to him for 25 minutes.

Types of Listening Skills

By Michael Joseph Hall, eHow Contributor

By focusing on improving one or two specific skills at a time it is easy to work at becoming a better listener. You could try asking good questions, repeating back information to the person you're listening to or show with your body and face that you're paying attention.

Demonstrate Interest

- Let your actions, your posture and your facial expressions show that you are interested in hearing what the other person has to say.

Ask Good Questions

- Questions can be used to ensure whether you have fully understood what was communicated, to invite the other party to share in more detail, or even to encourage them to view a situation from a different angle.

Be a Mirror

- No two people in the universe think alike, so it can be extremely revealing to take the time to reflect back to the other person what it is you understand him or her to have said.

Assume the Best

- When there is more than one potential interpretation for what a person may have meant or intended by what he or she said, begin with the most flattering option when asking for clarification.

Be Slow to Offer Solutions

- When someone shares troubling information, it is less likely because she is looking for advice than that she needs to simply "get it off her chest."

Offer Advice in Question Form

- Try offering advice as a question: "Have you looked into...?" "Have you considered trying...?"

Read more: Types of Listening Skills | eHow.com

http://www.ehow.com/facts_5130075_types-listening-skills.html#ixzz1ObhRYWcM

Barriers to listening:

1. External Distractions - *environment, noises, others*
2. Internal Distractions - *emotions, agenda, appearance*
3. Attitude toward the speaker - *prejudice, bias*
4. Boredom / Impatience
5. Urge to Talk
6. Premature Judgment
7. Information Overload - *too much data*

Attitudes Related to Listening

EMPATHIZING (Understanding) A continual active effort to understand and experience another person's world from their perspective while communicating that understanding with an attitude of caring and love. (**Gal 6:1, Rom 12:5, 15:1, 2Cor 1:4, 1Ths 5:14, Heb 4:15**)

Involves Responding to:

Content - *by paraphrasing, restating, or summarizing the circumstances of the situation.*

Feelings - *ability to identify with their feelings and the intensity.*

Meaning - *connecting the feeling with the content "You feel ___ Because ___?"*

Benefits of Empathy:

Communicates acceptance and caring laying the foundation for change

Communicates understanding of the situation and the person

Promotes Self-awareness that leads people to talk through their own issues

Effective Empathy:

Focuses on verbal and non-verbal messages

Suspends Judgment about what the counselee is saying

Responds to feeling, content and meaning

Responds with a tone of voice similar to that of the counselee

Moves from reflection to insight

Leads to perceptive prayer

RESPECTING (Valuing) Maintaining and demonstrating an attitude of unconditional acceptance and positive regard for the person while valuing and believing in the person and their potential. (**Eph 4:32, Rom 15:7, 5:8, Phl 1:6, 2:13, Psm 20:4**)

Respecting behavior and attitudes:

Unconditional Acceptance - *no matter how long it takes, be patient*

Acknowledging their free will - *refuse to control, manipulate, or make choices for them to change them.*

Believe in them and in God - *love believes in potential, "Do you want to change? Are you will to pay the price?"*

Appreciate them - *recognize the image of God and Christ in them as an important member of the body of Christ.*

Barriers to Respecting:

Categorizing Sin - *ranking sin in different levels of evilness*

Counselors Attitude - *critical, impatient, prejudice, judgmental*

Counselors Ego -

Expressing Respect:

Demonstrate accurate empathy - *show concern*

Advocating - *for them attitude, prayer, follow up*

Appreciation - *of their strengths, uniqueness, growth,*

Preparation - *55% of the message, posture, facial expressions, movement*

GENUINENESS Being sincere, honest, transparent, vulnerable, approachable, and available. Not playing counselor, maintaining distance, or being superficial. **(Rom 5:14, 7:18, 12:3, Jam 1:22, Gal 6:1, Phl 3:17, 1Cor 11:1, 2Cor 12:9)**

Personal Level Genuineness:

Practicing Personal godliness
Accurately Assessing Yourself
Consistency between your beliefs /values and lifestyle
Ministering to others out of your own experience with God
Being able to say follow me as I follow Christ

Attributes of Genuineness:

Sincerity - *without leaks, will hold up under heat*
Availability - *ready to give full attention and focus*
Credibility - *consistency, reliability between what you say and do and feel*
Being yourself - *not playing a role not using jargon*
Demonstrate Real Concern - *not treating them as a case or problem but a person*
Spontaneity and Flexibility - *not packaged, rigid, or planned. Applying truth specifically to needs*
Unshockability - *sin is in everyone, don't categorize it*
Honesty - *speaking the truth in love*
Sharing Yourself - *interests, feelings, thoughts, weaknesses*
Not Being Defensive
Acknowledging your limitations - *being able to refer*

Cultivating Genuineness:

Being over doing - *don't give maturity priority over the person*
Holy Spirit - *acknowledge dependency upon God, God alone can effect true internal change*
Scripture - *the living Word of God must be actively applied*
Love - *counseling involves loving people not simply solving problems*

Results of Genuineness:

Keeps both focused on God - *God is the primary relationship*
Keeps counselor from anxiety, coercion, rationalizing, and pride

CLARIFYING (Diagnosing) Identifying specific feelings, behaviors, situations and relationships that are relevant to the problem. Vague is the opposite. If problems are not discussed in concrete and specific terms, it is difficult if not impossible to solve them.

Barriers to Concreteness:

Lack of Trust and Acceptances - *counselee must trust the counselor and feel accepted*
Sensitivity of the Subject / Problem - *acknowledging sin, confronting struggles, failure, sex*
Fear of Exposure / Change - *external and internal*

Encouraging Concreteness:

Be as concrete as possible yourself - *hitting the nail on the head, specific on feelings and the intensity*
Don't allow them to ramble
Ask for more specific information to clarify vague statements

7 Listening Skills Notes

Goals of Clarifying:

- Help counselee think and communicate concretely and specifically about the problem
- Stimulate the counselee to examine their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in relation to the problem
- Penetrate through the presenting problem to the real problem
- Gain an understanding into the resources available to solve the problem
- Make the problem more solvable

Areas to be Clarified:

- Background - *what is the problem what happened, how long,*
- Relationship Involved / Effected - *family, work, friends, believers, church*
- Assumptions / Thinking - *attitudes and underlining behavior*
- Goals / Exceptions - *what do they want,*
- Values - *personal and practice self-invested time, money, talk about, think about,*
- Resources

Life Areas:

- Marital / Family
- Social / Friendship
- Occupation
- Finances
- Spiritual Life - *private and public*
- Sexual Activity
- Recreation - *physical activity*
- Physical Health
- Leisure Activity - *to relax*
- Routine Responsibilities

GUIDING (Treating) Helping the counselee solve their own problems by using the Word of God and other resources to guide and motivate them to implement principles and strategies leading to freedom and godliness.

Guiding Skills:

- Teaching - *communicating what Scripture reveals about the topic or problem so the counselee understands the Biblical perspective and Gods love and will for us. (Col 3:16, 1:28)*
- Leading - *modeling godliness in your lifestyle while guiding the counselee through life application of truth. (John 10:1)*
- Encouraging - *stimulating motivation in the counselee to implement action and change by grace and truth. (1Ths 5:11)*
- Evaluating - *holding the counselee accountable for implementing grace and truth. (Heb 10:24)*
- Confronting - *correcting and restoring the counselee to right relationship with God when they rebel. (Rom 15:14, Gal 6:1)*

How are Your Listening Skills? A Quick Self-Rating Quiz

The following quiz is designed to show you what skills are necessary to be a good listener. Answer these questions by grading your Listening Behaviors. Read the question and think about whether the statements are true of you. If the statement is always true of you, write an "A" for "Always" in the column that says "my grade." If the statement is not always true of you, then write an "S" for "Sometimes" or an "R" for "Rarely" would indicate that you would rarely or never listen that way.

	Listening Behavior	My grade
1.	I allow speakers to complete sentences before I speak.	
2.	I make sure I understand the other person'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 visualize my response before I speak.	
6.	I visualize the solution before speaking.	
7.	I am in control, relaxed, and calm when listening.	
8.	I use listening noises such as yes, gee, I see.	
9.	I take notes when someone else is speaking.	
10.	I listen with an open mind.	
11.	I listen even if the other person is not interesting.	
12.	I listen even if the other person is a moron.	
13.	I look directly at the person speaking.	
14.	I am patient when I listen.	
15.	I ask questions to be sure I understand the speaker.	
16.	I do not allow distractions to bother me when I listen.	

GRADING INFORMATION

If you have mostly **Always** (14 to 16) you are an excellent listener. If you marked 11 to 13 statements as **Always** you are a good listener but could use some help in a few areas. If you marked **Always** for 7 to 10 statements, you are a fair listener. If you marked **Always** for 4 to 6 statements, you are a poor listener. Less than 4 indicates that you are an extremely poor listener.

www.nadasisland.com/team/listening-test.htm

How to ask questions

Asking the right question at the right time is closely connected with the ability to listen. In general, counselors with a teaching background tend to ask too many questions at a too early stage in the conversation. It can be important to ask questions concerning both feelings and values. Inexperienced counselors tend to “keep to the subject”, the exterior, in order to avoid getting too involved and having to cope with too many emotional problems.

Questions concerning data

Questions concerning data must be formulated in such a way that the answers become as concrete and specific as possible. Use “how?” and “what?” and avoid asking “why?”, which often forces the client into long, defensive explanations, which are usually of no use.

Example:

P: Nobody likes me at work!

C: Hem...

P: No, not one single person. Except perhaps Ben in his awkward way

C: You say he has an awkward way. How does he behave?

P: He always giggles when I look at him

C: I see. What do the others, then?

P: They have certainly not invited me home all the time I've been working there

C: So the fact that nobody invites you home means that nobody likes you?

P: Yes, I suppose so

C: Let's try to look at it from the other side. What do you do if you like people?

It can be important to make the client look at an incident from other angles.

Example:

“You have now mentioned a number of aspects of the matter, could there be others?” If the client sees false connections between cause and effect, the counselor can try to ask questions to clarify this.

Example:

“You say there is a connection between and, are you sure of that?”

“How could you become sure that this is the case?”

“Do you tend to think that everything is either black or white?”

Questions concerning feelings and values

This type of question is closely connected with the concepts of reflection and empathy.

Example:

“What is your opinion of this?”

“How do you feel about that?”

“What do you prefer?”

“What did you feel when you were in that situation?”

“What do you consider most important?”

In some cases it can be useful to de-dramatize the situation - without minimizing it – in order to make the client consider the situation in a way that involves both feelings and reason.

Example:

“What is the worst situation you can imagine?”

“Could you live with a situation where you did not entirely achieve what you want?”

“What would be an acceptable alternative?”

Open and closed questions

The questions control the content and direction of a conversation. Closed questions are highly controlling, whereas open questions leave some of the control to the client. There is usually only one correct answer to closed questions. In open questions it is up to the client to decide what he/she wants to consider more closely.

Examples of closed questions:

“How many jobs have you had within the past year?”

“When did you become unemployed?”

Examples of open questions:

“How do you feel about being unemployed?”

“What are your wishes for the future?”

“What would you like to get out of this course?”

The good questioner

- Asks short questions
- Asks one question at a time
- Does not explain his questions – this will only cause confusion
- Waits for the answer
- Does not answer his own questions
- Does not interrogate the client
- Does not ask questions that he thinks he can answer correctly himself