



# Active Listening Techniques

## Active Listening Techniques

Active listening is an important life skill. Your listening skills can impact many aspects of your life, including how well you do your job or the quality of your personal relationships.

If you're serious about maximizing your success, then you have to be serious about becoming a strong communicator. Although good communication skills include the ability to share ideas through speaking or writing, ***listening is a key essential component of good communication.***

**Here are some techniques you can use to become an active listener:**

- 1. Be attentive.** Give the speaker your undivided attention. Turn your body towards them and maintain eye contact. In addition to listening to the words being spoken, pay attention to what is said through nonverbal communication, like body language and gestures, to really understand their message.
  - In order to pay full attention, ***you must put aside any distracting thoughts.*** Don't use the speaker's turn to prepare your response. If you're thinking of what you'll say next, you're likely to miss what's being said now.
- 2. Give the speaker cues to show that you're listening.** Confirm that you're listening by using with visual cues through gestures and body language.
  - A quick and easy way to communicate that you're paying attention is to ***make frequent eye contact and nod when appropriate.*** This action shows your agreement and makes it clear that you're engaged in what the speaker's saying.
  - Smiling, laughing and other appropriate expressions are clear responses that will let a person know you really are hearing what's being said.

**3. Respond to their message.** Maintain a welcoming, open posture to show you're receptive to what the speaker has to say. This might include facing the speaker, leaning toward them, and staying alert. Short interjections like "*uh-huh*" or "*yes*" encourage them to tell you more.

- To make it clear that you're actively engaged in a conversation, ***periodically summarize what has been said.*** Paraphrasing can be particularly useful when someone is sharing personal feelings with you. This way you can be sure that you have a clear understanding.
- Ask questions to clarify points you don't understand.

**4. Avoid interrupting.** Always be sure to allow the speaker to complete his thoughts. ***Interrupting someone is both rude and disconcerting.*** It also prevents you from hearing the full message.

- When the speaker is finished, respond accordingly and appropriately, offering your ideas and opinions in response to what he said. While you may not always agree with others, you must still be respectful.

**5. Concentrate on what the speaker is saying.** If you're not accustomed to focusing intently on the words being said, it may take some time to change your habits. As with anything, the more you practice, the better you'll become.

- ***Repeat the speaker's words in your mind*** to help your mind focus on the meaning and prevent it from drifting off.

You'll be surprised at how differently you'll hear things as an active listener. If you follow these tips, you'll not only become an active listener, but a better communicator as well.