



Five Key Listening Tips

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After you read the following listening tips and select one area to begin working on today.

- 1. Prepare to Listen.** Focused attention, even for a few minutes, requires effort. Good listeners prepare themselves mentally and set the stage for ways to concentrate on what the person is saying. Instead of walking into a meeting “cold,” plan ahead for ways to demonstrate involvement and attentiveness. The following suggestions can help you prepare to focus on the speaker.
 - Remove or reduce distractions by turning away from computers or turning off cell phones and tablets.
 - Sit or move in close range of the speaker.
 - Minimize interruptions by finding a private environment.
 - Look at the speaker frequently.
- 2. Look like an Effective Listener.** You may be listening, but not be getting credit for it. If others can't tell you are listening because you are signing papers, glancing at your phone, or looking at an attractive person nearby, then in their minds you *aren't*. You may be able to repeat what they have said word for word, but still not be perceived as listening. To show that you are...
 - Use frequent eye contact.
 - Lean forward slightly.
 - Nod frequently.
 - Give verbal feedback often.
- 3. Listen for Key Messages.** Have you ever walked away from a meeting and tried to remember the main points? When meeting agendas get sidetracked, you get off-track as a listener. You may remember interesting stories or trivia, but forget the key ideas but not realize you've missed the point until it is too late. To avoid missing key ideas, consider the following:
 - Listen carefully to previews and summaries.
 - Don't try to remember everything.
 - Review main points in your mind to help remember them.
 - Take good notes when you can.
- 4. Keep Emotions Under Control.** You may experience your emotions taking over when someone questions your intent or makes a negative comment about something you value. When this happens, you probably begin thinking of immediate comebacks or engage in verbal warfare. Letting your emotions interfere with listening gets you off track and keeps you from accurately interpreting or remembering important points others are saying. To avoid letting emotions take over:
 - Be aware, in advance, of people and words that trigger your emotions.
 - Take a deep breath before responding.

- Empathize - speakers may have different meanings for words than you.
 - Withhold judgments until the speaker is finished.
5. **Give Clear Feedback.** Listener responses include verbal and nonverbal behaviors such as answers to questions, applause, frowns and nods. When you react without thinking, your reactions may be inappropriate or confusing to others. Keep in mind that feedback should be constructive, specific and well timed. When responding to others, send feedback:
- As quickly as possible.
 - Appropriate to the person, message and context of the situation.
 - After you clarify that you have understood the message.
 - That is constructive and objective.