

Effective Communication: The Art of Listening

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When the word communication is used, many people think of speaking, but the true communicators know listening is extremely important. Have you ever known someone who is an excellent listener, someone you enjoy conversing with because he or she is an “active listener?” This person will respond with thoughtful nods and verbal confirmations so you know what you’re saying is not only being heard, but also comprehended. Effective listening is an extremely important part of the communication process, but is often disregarded.

Instructions: Respond to each item by placing an (X) in the space that best expresses how the statement describes you. If the statement is not like you at all, check space number one. If it fits perfectly, check space five. The spaces in between allow you to indicate various degrees of fit. If you are torn between feeling it does or does not apply, check space number three, the halfway mark.

Unlike Me

Like Me

1 2 3 4 5

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 1. Listen with your eyes - I maintain eye contact and focus on what the speaker is saying. This sends the message that I am interested in what is being said. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 2. Use positive body language - I am an active listener and demonstrate my interest by leaning forward, occasionally nodding, using facial expressions, and verbally responding with brief affirmations. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 3. Pause before replying - I pause to guarantee that I don’t interrupt the speaker. This also indicates that I am pondering what is being said. The intelligent conversationalist is patient and aware of the power of non-verbal communication. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 4. Use names - Periodically throughout the communication process I use the name of the person. This conveys a personal interest in the individual. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 5. Ask follow-up questions - I often answer questions by asking follow-up questions. This indicates that I am listening and it keeps the conversation flowing. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 6. Ask for an example - To make sure I understand what has been said, I periodically ask the speaker to cite an example. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 7. Sum up what has been stated - By paraphrasing the speaker’s words I confirm that I have been listening. This is also an excellent time to check for understanding. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 8. Take notes - By taking notes I send the message that I am sincere in following up on the key points. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 9. Eliminate distractions - When the conversation approaches a more serious level I make it a point to be more aware of the surroundings and avoid potential distractions. |
| ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | 10. Build Trust – I’m non-judgmental and keep an open mind toward the speaker. The more I listen, the more I build trust and understanding. |

-----My Score

Scoring: Add up your total points to determine how you rank as an effective listener. The following scale will give you some idea of your listening effectiveness at this time.

44 – 50 Outstanding listening ability! You must share your techniques with others.

36 – 43 An impressive score! You possess the key characteristics of effective listeners.

28 – 35 Improve in several categories and you will become an excellent listener.

20 – 27 Much potential exists. Keep working on a self-improvement plan.

Below 20 – It is up to you to alter your attitude and approach to develop a better listening ability.