

**Effective Listening:**

Listening is an essential part of spoken communication. Speaking and listening go together and oral communication can not be effective without proper listening. Poor listening defeats the very purpose of spoken words. Listening is a deliberate effort and is much more than hearing. It requires getting the full meaning of what is being said.

Listening effectively takes skill, self-motivation, and practice. Effective listening means concentrating on what the speaker says rather than on how it is said. Lack of attention and respectful listening can be costly - leading to mistakes, poor service, misaligned goals, wasted time and lack of teamwork.

**Reasons for Effective Listening**

Listening is an important aspect of business communication. It stands third after writing and speaking. A business communicator has to listen to various customer, employees, officer, suppliers, financiers etc. Obviously, it is an unavoidable task for a business person. This important reason as to why a business communicator should known about listening is enumerated as under.

**1.**To gain new information and ideas.

**2.**To question and test evidence and assumptions.

**3.**To be inspired and motivated.

**4.**To improve overall communication.

The explanation of these points is as under:

**1. To Gain New Information and Ideas:**A business person has to get new information and ideas from various parties. For example he gets the information from customers regarding the product. He takes various ideas from the employees inside the organization. He receives order or instruction forms his superiors. He gets training form his instructor. All these activities require him to be a good listener.

**2. To Question Test Evidence and Assumptions:** Any activity, particularly business, activity requires good analytical skill to survive in the environment. A good listener does not feel much difficulty in doing so. The message of speaker mostly consists of facts (Verifiable data) or opinions (inferences). Good listeners test those facts and opinions against assumptions and then question the speaker. In this way he is able to analyze the massage and treat it on its merit.

**3. To be Inspired a Motivated:** A dynamic business man wants to be motivated again and again. Good listening enables him to take inspiration from the message and brings about enthusiasm in his attitude.

**4. To Improve Overall Communication:** A business person needs strong communication skills to survive in the market. And to face a high degree of competition. This can only be achieved by having strength in all areas of communicating i.e. writing, reading, speaking and particularly listening.

**Listening is of various types depending upon the speaker**

**1. Discriminative Listening:**When the listener differentiates between different parts of the speaker messages.

**2. Evaluative Listening:**Listening is said to be evaluative when the listener evaluates the evidence and reaches a conclusion.

**3. Appreciative Listening:** Here the listener shows by words or his body language that he likes some part of a speech and agrees with the speaker.

**4. Empathic Listening:**When the listener puts himself in the place of the position of the speaker it is called Empathic Listening.

**5. Active Listening:** When the listener genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message means, and active in checking out our understanding it is called active listening.

**Listening Process**

Listening is a seven stage process of:

**1.** Hearing

**2.**Selecting

**3.**Attending

**4.**Understanding

**5.**Evaluating

**6.**Remembering

**7.**Responding actively with feedback

This process can be summarized in to four steps. The Four Steps of Listening are:

**1.**Hearing is the first step in the process. At this stage, Listener has to pay attention to make sure that he heard the message.

**2.** The second step is interpretation. Failure to interpret the speaker's words correctly frequently leads to misunderstanding. People sometimes interpret words differently because of varying experience, knowledge, vocabulary, culture, background, and attitudes.

**3.**A good speaker uses tone of voice, facial expressions, and mannerisms to help make the message clear to the listener. During the third step, evaluation, Listener has to decide what to do with the information he has received. The judgments make in the evaluation stage are a crucial part of the listening process.

**4.**The final step is to respond. This is a verbal or visual response that lets the speaker know whether Listener has gotten the message and what his reaction is.

**Importance of Listening**

**1.**It helps us to understand the people and the world around us.

**2.** In our society, listening is essential to the development and survival of the individual.

**3.**Relationships depends more on listening skills than on speaking skills.

**4.**A good listener is always in a better position to deal with his problems and relationships.

**5.** It helps a person to grow in his career.

**6.** It keeps a person well informed

**7.** It helps an organization to meet its objectives.

**8.** Being listened to spells the difference between feeling accepted and feeing isolated.

**9.** A good listener rarely involves himself in controversies and misunderstanding.

**10.**Listening skills are critical to effective leadership.

**11.**Good listeners are often the best speakers because they have taken the time to find out what people are truly interested in.

**Guidelines for Effective Listening**

Listening is very important aspect of communication. Around 20% of overall communication is listening. Therefore, one should strive for adopting good listening habit.

There are following guidelines for good listening:

**(1)**Preparation before listening.

**(2)** Listening to understand, not to refute.

**(3)** Focusing the attention.

**(4)**Concentration on context.

**(5)** Taking notes.

**(6)** Curbing the impulse to interrupt.

**(7)** Asking questions.

**(8)** Summary & evaluation.

The details of each point are as follows:

**1. Preparation before listening:** As already mentioned that listening plays important role in communication. So one should prepare himself before starting listening. In preparation, there are following guidelines:

**(i) Stop talking:** Human brain can perform one activity efficiently at a time, so during listening there should be no talking by the listener.

**(ii) Remove distraction:**Noisy fan, traffic noise, entrance of unauthorized persons may interrupt the listening process. All these barriers should be removed.

**(iii) Good environmental conditions:**There should not be extraordinary cold or warm environment and ventilations should be proper.

**2. Listening to understand, not to refute:**There could be many topics to which the listener has reservations. Apart form these reservations, the listener should try his best to understand the message.

**3. Focusing the attention:**There may be many objects on which the listener should construct a mental outline of where the speaker is going in his speech.

**4. Concentration on context:**The listener should keep in mind the background and theme of speech. This thing enables him to absorb the material quickly and efficiently.

**5. Taking notes:**Listener should keep on taking notes. Hence, he should jot down ideas rather than sentences. In this way, he/she could make the message safe for a long time.

**6. Curbing the impulse to interrupt:**One should avoid interrupting the speech until the speaker invites questions. This habit puts the speaker and listener both at ease.

**7. Asking questions:** Asking right question on right time is quite different form interruption. Listener should have an idea to know right time to ask questions.

**8. Summary & evaluation:**The listener should summarize and speech but not during listening process.