

## **Module 3: Listening Skills**

### **Process of listening, Types of listening, Overcoming barriers to listening, Tips for effective listening**

#### **What is Listening?**

Listening is most powerful skill in everyday field of life. Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process. It is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, there can be misunderstanding, miscommunication, conflict.

It helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy. At work, effective listening means fewer errors and less wasted time. Listening is so important that it brings success in professional setting too. For an effective technical communication, the role of listening cannot be overlooked. Many top employers provide listening skills training for their employees. Good listening skills can lead to better customer satisfaction, greater productivity with fewer mistakes, and increased sharing of information that in turn can lead to more creative and innovative work.

#### **Listening involves four stages:**

##### **Steps of Listening**

Listening is a physical and psychological process that involves choosing to listen, understanding, and responding to symbolic messages from others. It includes the following steps:

- a) Hearing**
- b) Choosing**
- c) Understanding**
- d) Responding**

#### **Hearing versus listening**

Simply having good hearing does not make one a good listener. Hearing is involuntary and listening involves the reception and interpretation of what is heard. Listening starts with hearing but goes beyond this. If we are actively listening, then we absorb what we hear, we think about it and we store it in our short memory, may be later on, add it to our long term memory. To listen is thus an active effort and hearing is passive. Brownell (2006) defines —Hearing is essentially a physiological process, involves three interconnected stages: reception of sound waves, perception of sound in the brain, and auditory association. Having good hearing does facilitate one's perception of sound; but good listeners don't simply hear words—they focus on the meaning. Effective listening implies that the listener understands what the speaker means. Hearing is the reception of sound, listening is the attachment of meaning to the sound. Hearing is passive, listening is active.

## **Advantages of Listening:**

Listening effectively can ensure the following advantages:

- Better performers
- Increase knowledge
- Develop critical thinking
- Prevent miscommunication
- Better customer satisfaction
- Greater productivity with fewer mistakes
- Sharing of information
- creative and innovative work

## **Difference between Active and Passive Listening**

In **active listening**, listener pays full attention to the speaker and his/her word

In **passive listening**, listener acts passively by receiving the message only without giving further external indications.

In active listening, the listener shows interest through tone, eye contact and body language. While in passive listening, the listener is not involved, have a selective and ignoring attitude

Active listening is a two-way communication because both speaker and listener are interacting with each other while passive listening is a one-way

In active listening, the listener pays full attention by commenting, challenging the ideas and asking questions, whereas, in passive listening, the listener doesn't react at all.

Active listening requires effort because the listener has to be attentive while passive listening doesn't require much effort.

In passive listening, listener only listens, whereas, in active listening, listener keeps himself in other activities like analyzing, evaluating and summarizing.

Active listeners give more time to listening than talking while passive listener listens to few words and talk more or pay no attention to both areas.

Active listening means an open minded, strong willed and having an interest in new ideas. Passive listening means being narrow-minded and unreceptive to new ideas.

## **Describe how to improve listening skills?**

- Stop Talking
- Prepare Yourself to Listen
- Remove Distractions
- Empathize

- Be Patient
- Avoid Personal Prejudice
- Listen to the Tone
- Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words
- Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication