

# LISTENING SKILLS



# “Are you listening to me?”

- This question is often asked because the speaker thinks the listener is nodding off or daydreaming.



# Difference between Listening and Hearing

Listening	Hearing
Involves a series of cognitive steps	Physiological process
Active	Passive
Learned process	Natural

# WHAT IS LISTENING?

- Listening and hearing are not the same; listening is a lot more complex than hearing.
- Listening can be described as a series of five steps: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding.

- On average people only grasp about 50% of what is heard
- On average after 24 hours people only remember 10% of the original message
- People who typically listen well are:
  - Top business executives
  - Successful politicians
  - Excellent teachers

- More than 60% of business errors come from poor listening
- Effective listening improves:
  - Efficiency
  - Sales
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Employee moral
- Effective listeners tend to hold higher job positions and have higher grades
- Bad listening can lead to passing on bad information

# Kinds of Listening

- There are 4 kinds of listening:
- Appreciate listening
  - Listening for pleasure or enjoyment
  - Examples: Music, Comedy, Entertaining Speech
- Empathetic listening
  - Listening to provide emotional support to a speaker
  - Examples: Friend in distress, psychiatrist to a patient

- Comprehensive listening

- Listening to understand the message of the speaker
  - Examples: Classroom lecture, directions to someone's house

- Critical Listening

- Listening to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it
  - Examples: Sales pitch, Campaign speech

- You must use your mind as well as your ears when listening critically and comprehensively



# Causes of Poor Listening

- There are 4 main causes of Poor Listening:
  - Not Concentrating
    - Spare “brain time”: The difference between the rate at which most people talk (120 to 150 words a minute) and the rate at which the brain can process language (400 to 800 words a minute)
- Listening Too Hard
  - In trying to get every single detail, often the main point is missed

- Jumping to Conclusions

- Listener's put words in the speaker's mouth that aren't there
- The listener is so sure they know what the speaker means, they don't listen to what they actually say
- Prematurely rejecting a speaker's idea as boring or misguided

- Focusing on Delivery and Personal Appearance

- Listeners judge speakers based on the way they look or speak and thus do not actually listen to what they are saying

# How to Become a Better Listener

- There are many ways in which to become a better listener:
  - Take Listening Seriously
    - Good listeners are not born that way, they work at it
    - Requires practice and self-discipline

- Be an Active Listener

- Passive listening vs. Active listening

- Passive examples: Studying with music on, listening to someone while making dinner

- Active listening: Giving undivided attention to a speaker in a genuine effort to understand the speaker's point of view

## ◦Resist Distractions

### ◦Make a conscious effort to resist distractions

- Try to anticipate what the speaker is going to say and listen to see how it compares

### ◦Mentally review what the speaker has said and make sure you understand it

### ◦Listen between the lines and assess what a speaker implies verbally and says nonverbally with body language

## ◦Don't be Diverted By Appearance or Delivery

### ◦Set aside preconceived judgments based on a person's looks or manner of speech

### ◦Don't be misled by appearances in both “positive” and “negative” manners

- Suspend Judgment

- Hear people without making a final judgment
- Try to understand their point of view
- A closed mind is an empty mind

- Focus on Your Listening
  - Listen for main points
  - Most speeches are made up of 2-4 main points

- Listen for Evidence

- Is it relevant to the speaker's claims?
  - Concern yourself with the evidence:
    - Is it sufficient to support the speaker's point?
    - Is it accurate?
    - Is it taken from objective sources?



- Listen for Technique

- Analyze the introduction
  - Assess the organization of the speech
  - How is attention grabbed?
  - Is it clear and easy to follow?
  - How does the speaker relate to the audience?
  - What are the main points?

- Study the speaker's language
  - Is it accurate, clear, vivid, and appropriate?
  - Does the speaker adapt well to audience?
- Diagnose the speaker's delivery:
  - Is it fluent, dynamic, and convincing?

- How well does the speaker use eye contact and visual aids?
- Figure out why it went well or it didn't

- Develop Note-taking Skills

- Know what to listen for and know how to record it

- Key-word outline: An outline that briefly notes a speaker's main points and supporting evidence in rough outline form

- Brief but clear notes separated by main idea and supporting evidence of each

- Practice makes perfect!