

Active Listening

Directions: To evaluate your listening behavior, fill out the following questionnaire. See if you can honestly answer yes to each question.

1. _____ Do you make an effort to identify the goal or purpose of the lecture?
2. _____ Do you take notes while you listen?
3. _____ Do you copy information written on the board or overhead during a lecture?
4. _____ Do you vary your note-taking method with the material, changing as you move from a chemistry lecture to one on American literature?
5. _____ Do you leave space for your personal responses when you take notes?
6. _____ Do you have your own format or plan for taking notes?
7. _____ Do you read and revise your notes within twenty-four hours of the lecture.
8. _____ Do you summarize/main supporting points and restate these points using your own words?
9. _____ Do you prepare for a lecture before by consciously considering what you already know about the subject to be discussed, reviewing your notes and/or reading other materials related to the subject?
10. _____ Do you listen for verbal cues that indicate important points?
11. _____ Do you pay attention to the instructor's non-verbal cues?
12. _____ Do you make a conscious effort to sift information as you listen, deciding what is crucial and what is not?
13. _____ Do you make it a point to sit in the front of the class where you cannot possibly daydream or doodle?
14. _____ Do you try to keep an open mind, even when the ideas differ from what you already know or believe?

Barriers to Good Listening

The following are some of the barriers which might get in the way of effective communication.

1. Past Experiences

Often, we might find ourselves deciding ahead of time that we already know what the message is going to be, or that it is going to be uninteresting and unimportant, so we “screen” the message.

2. Preoccupations and Distractions

When there are other things on our minds, we might let a message pass completely over our heads, without taking in the full meaning.

3. Preconceptions and Beliefs

We may tune out certain individuals before they’ve had a chance, if we dislike them (or their looks) or expect to be bored with them. We may tune out the part of the message that doesn’t agree with our own views.

4. Physical Surroundings

Noise, temperature, telephone and other distracting influences, or other external events, can distort the impact of the message.

Beware of conditions which might interfere with the communication process, and attempt to modify them as much as possible so that the message is not distorted, misinterpreted, or missed entirely.

Barriers to Listening

“I am sitting here because I don’t want to hurt your feelings, or I fear punishment if I don’t.”

“Something very interesting over there is attracting me and therefore distracting me from you.”

“I already know what you are going to say so I turn off my attention.”

“I fear you are going to criticize me and I am defending myself and I don’t hear you.”

“I am very preoccupied with worry about myself and I don’t hear you.”

“I have unfinished business with you and I can’t hear you now. I hear you still from yesterday.”

“I am not seeing you, but who you remind me of, so I hear their voice instead.”