

Listening Skills (<http://www.educationcorner.com/listening-skills.html>)

Attentive listeners are usually good learners. Unfortunately, many students have poor listening skills, which can be very problematic because students spend considerable time in classrooms listening to lectures during high school. Many students believe they are good listeners; unfortunately they don't fully appreciate the difference between hearing and listening. Attentive listeners do not just hear, they effectively process the information presented to them.

The following tips and strategies will help you be a more attentive listener:

Listen for meaning

Listening for meaning is a form of active listening. Active and attentive listeners not only pay attention to words, they also focus on the intent of each word—the message a word is intended to communicate. To decipher messages, first determine the central idea being communicated. Then pay close attention to anecdotes, explanations, and other details meant to clarify meaning. While you work to improve listening skills, always pay close attention to the central focus of what is being relayed.

While you're listening, and after the listen task has ended, check your comprehension. Did what you learn make sense within the context of the topic or central idea being communicated? Monitoring and checking comprehension makes sure that you're active listening strategy is working.

Adjust your note taking style to the lecture

Ineffective listeners often attempt to jot down every detail from a lecture. They are under the impression that a detailed outline equates to good notes. Students who utilize this strategy often get discouraged when they review their notes only to find the breadth, detail and lack of focus in their note-taking is confusing and leaves them unable to identify central themes and important topics. Effective listeners adapt their note-taking to the teaching styles of their teachers and lectures. They focus on central ideas and jot down details that expand on, or clarify, the central concepts of a lecture.

Tackle difficult to understand material

It's not uncommon for students tune out teachers when they start discussing confusing or complex topics. Even when it's possible to hear every word during a lecture, it can be very difficult to process confusing or complicated concepts. Good listeners harness their mental faculties to process what is being presented.

Concentrate and pay attention

People who struggle with listening often have a difficult time concentrating. Good listeners must work to develop the ability to concentrate and ignore distractions. This requires the ability to tune out personal worries, thoughts about family members and friends, and thoughts about upcoming activities. Those who can hone the ability to concentrate can improve listening skills.

Be prepared

If you do not complete required reading or review notes from previous classes prior to class, it is very difficult to process information and attentively listen to lectures. This is why you should never neglect to complete reading or other class assignments. Attending class prepared provides you the background knowledge required to be an effective listener—and an effective student.

Focus on what's important

One of the keys of effective listening is the ability to concentrate on central ideas and main focuses. It is a mistake to only be concerned about facts and extemporaneous detail during a lecture. In other words, effective listeners focus on the stories or ideas behind the facts. They then are able to pick up on the supporting fact, details and evidence for the main concepts, ideas and topics being discussed.

Choose to be interested

Many people tune out lectures because they're bored or disinterested. As a result, they neglect to take notes on key concepts. Effective listeners become interested in the subject material, so they can process the information and pay attention to classroom lectures.