

Hearing is NOT the Same as *Listening*

**Local Elected Leaders Academy
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Signs of Active Listening

Verbal Signs of Attentive or Active Listening

Positive Reinforcement

Although a strong signal of attentiveness, caution should be used when using positive verbal reinforcement.

Although some positive words of encouragement may be beneficial to the speaker the listener should use them sparingly so as not to distract from what is being said or place unnecessary emphasis on parts of the message.

Casual and frequent use of words and phrases, such as: '*very good*', '*yes*' or '*indeed*' can become irritating to the speaker. It is usually better to elaborate and explain why you are agreeing with a certain point.

Remembering

The human mind is notoriously bad at remembering details, especially for any length of time.

However, remembering a few key points, or even the name of the speaker, can help to reinforce that the messages sent have been received and understood – i.e. listening has been successful. Remembering details, ideas and concepts from previous conversations proves that attention was kept and is likely to encourage the speaker to continue. During longer exchanges it may be appropriate to make very brief notes to act as a memory jog when questioning or clarifying later.

Questioning

The listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by asking relevant questions and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking relevant questions the listener also helps to reinforce that they have an interest in what the speaker has been saying.

Reflection

Reflecting is closely repeating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said in order to show comprehension. Reflection is a powerful skill that can reinforce the message of the speaker and demonstrate understanding.

Clarification

Clarifying involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received. Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the speaker to expand on certain points as necessary.

Summarization

Repeating a summary of what has been said back to the speaker is a technique used by the listener to repeat what has been said in their own words. Summarizing involves taking the main points of the received message and reiterating them in a logical and clear way, giving the speaker chance to correct if necessary.

Non-Verbal Signs of Attentive or Active Listening

This is a generic list of non-verbal signs of listening, in other words people who are listening are more likely to display at least some of these signs. However, these signs may not be appropriate in all situations and across all cultures.

Smile

Small smiles can be used to show that the listener is paying attention to what is being said or as a way of agreeing or being happy about the messages being received. Combined with nods of the head, smiles can be powerful in affirming that messages are being listened to and understood.

Eye Contact

It is normal and usually encouraging for the listener to look at the speaker. Eye contact can however be intimidating, especially for more shy speakers – gauge how much eye contact is appropriate for any given situation. Combine eye contact with smiles and other non-verbal messages to encourage the speaker.

Posture

Posture can tell a lot about the sender and receiver in interpersonal interactions. The attentive listener tends to lean slightly forward or sideways whilst sitting. Other signs of active listening may include a slight slant of the head or resting the head on one hand.

Mirroring

Automatic reflection/mirroring of any facial expressions used by the speaker can be a sign of attentive listening. These reflective expressions can help to show sympathy and empathy in more emotional situations. Attempting to consciously mimic facial expressions (i.e. not automatic reflection of expressions) can be a sign of inattention.

Distraction

The active listener will not be distracted and therefore will refrain from fidgeting, looking at a clock or watch, doodling, playing with their hair or picking their fingernails.

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html>

Listening Styles Inventory (LSI)

Instructions

This is a self-report test. It is only as accurate as (a) how well you know yourself, and (b) how honestly you are willing to respond to the items. Please consider each item, think about yourself and answer as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Learning about yourself through tests such as these can help you develop knowledge and skills in communication.

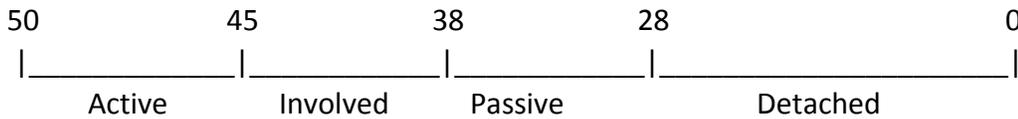
The following items relate to your listening style. Circle the appropriate responses.
Please be candid.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Some- times</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Almost Never</i>
1. I want to listen to what others have to say when they are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I do not listen at my capacity when others are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
3. By listening, I can guess a speaker's intent or purpose without being told.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I have a purpose for listening when others are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I keep control of my biases and attitudes when listening to others speak so that these factors won't affect my interpretation of the message.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I analyze my listening errors so as not to make them again.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I listen to the complete message before making judgments about what the speaker has said.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I cannot tell when a speaker's biases or attitudes are affecting his or her message.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I ask questions when I don't fully understand a speaker's message.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I am aware of whether or not a speaker's meaning of words and concepts is the same as mine.	5	4	3	2	1

Grand Total: _____ = _____ + _____ + _____ + _____

Please turn page over to interpret your score.

Place an X on the part of the scale below that corresponds to your grand total score.



Based on the score obtained from the listening inventory you completed, your perceived listening style is described below.

Active

The active listener gives full attention to listening when others are talking and focuses on what is being said. This person expends a lot of energy participating in the speaking listening exchange, which is usually evidenced by an alert posture or stance and much direct eye contact.

Involved

The involved listener gives most of his or her attention to the speaker’s words and intentions. This person reflects on the message to a degree and participates in the speaking-listening exchange. The involved listener practices some direct eye contact and may have alert posture or stance, although this may be intermittent.

Passive

The passive listener receives information as though being talked to rather than as being an equal partner in the speaking-listening exchange. While assuming that the responsibility for the success of the communication is the speaker’s, this listener is usually attentive, although attention may be faked at times. The passive listener seldom expends any noticeable energy in receiving and interpreting messages.

Detached

The detached listener withdraws from the speaking-listening exchange and becomes the object of the speaker’s message rather than its receiver. The detached listener is usually inattentive, disinterested, and may be restless, bored, or easily distracted. This person’s noticeable lack of enthusiasm maybe marked by slumped or very relaxed posture and avoidance of direct eye contact.

Please Note

- (1) The listening inventory gives you a general idea of your preferred listening style, how you view yourself. The scores indicating styles are approximations and should be regarded as such.
- (2) You may change your listening style when responding to a given situation or to your interests, intentions, or objectives. Such factors may be either internally or externally derived.

ACTIVE LISTENING HANDOUT

Seven Active Listening Techniques Used by Hostage Negotiators¹

Minimal Encouragements

Sounds made, especially on the phone, to let one person know the other is there and listening. Such as, “Oh?”, “When?”, and “Really?”. They are questions, comments, or sounds that do not interfere with the flow of conversation, but do let the subject know that the negotiator is there and listening. They help build rapport and encourage the subject to continue talking.

Paraphrasing

A summary in your own words of what you were told. Demonstrates listening, creates empathy and establishes rapport because it is evident that you have heard and understood. Usually, paraphrasing begins with the words, “Are you telling me...” or “Are you saying...” Paraphrasing also clarifies content, highlights issues and promotes give and take between you and the subject. It tends to make the subject a better listener.

Emotion Labeling

This is often the first active listening skill to be used in a crisis communication incident. It is important to be attuned to the emotion behind the words and facts. Commonly, we all want to get into problem-solving too early. Too early an approach to problem solving is doomed to failure because the subject is often not ready to reason and you have not listened enough to get all of the information you need to assist in problem solving. Common phrases for you to use are, “You sound...”, “You seem...”, “I hear...” (emotion heard by you). You do not tell people how they are feeling, but how they sound to you as if they are feeling.

Do not be concerned about making a mistake in labeling emotions. The subject will correct you and will often appear grateful for the attempt. Be aware of missing emotions and listen for conflicts in the feelings expressed, especially if they appear inappropriate to the situation. Emotion labeling is not a technique to apply when you are verbally attacked. In that instance, switch to an “I” message (see below).

¹ Adapted from *On-Scene Guide for Crisis Negotiators*, Frederick J. Lanceley, Boca Raton, CRC Press, 1999, pp 20-24.

Mirroring (or Reflecting)

This is the technique of repeating the last word or phrase and putting a question mark after it. This provides very exact responses because you are using the subject's own words. Reflecting or mirroring asks for more input without guiding the direction of the subject's thoughts and elicits information when you do not have enough to ask a pertinent question. It is useful when you are at a loss for words and it provides an opportunity for the subject to think about what you have said.

Open-Ended Questions

The primary use of open-ended questions is to help a subject start talking. Asking open-ended questions encourages the person to say more without actually directing the conversation. They are questions that cannot be answered with a single word such as "yes" or "no". Open-ended questions get information for you with fewer questions, those that usually begin with how, what, when and where. Note that "why" questions are not asked directly. "Why" questions tend to steer the conversation toward blame and shut down communication. "Why" questions also tend to pass judgment.

Closed-end questions give a feeling of interrogation that makes rapport building difficult. They also cause you to work too hard at thinking up new questions.

"I" Messages

"I" messages enable negotiators to let the subject know how he is making you feel, why you feel that way, and what the subject can do to remedy the situation. This is a non-threatening approach and does not put the subject on the defensive. "I" messages are used when communication is difficult because of the intense emotions being directed at you. It is also used when the subject is trying to manipulate you and you want him to stop the attempts. Negotiators also use this technique to refocus the subject and when they are verbally attacked.

Effective Pauses

Silence can be very effective on a number of levels. Most people are not comfortable with silence and will fill it with talk. It is to your advantage to keep the subject talking. Silence can also be used to emphasize a point. You can use silence just before or just after saying something important.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIOS

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #1:

You're talking to your friend about your spouse, whom you are angry at because he/she is consumed with work, is always at the office and has missed several important outings with you and the family. You're feeling somewhat embarrassed and don't really wish to "air your laundry" in public, but, at the same time you feel a real need to talk about it.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #2:

You're talking to your supervisor who called you in to ask if you were okay. You have been tired and worn out for the last several weeks. You just don't feel enthused about anything and each day is not something you look forward to. You feel like you're just going through the motions on everything you do.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #3

You're talking to a co-worker about one of the new guys, who gives you the creeps (and you're not really sure why).

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #4

You're talking to your supervisor who just walked in after you got off the phone with yet another irate caller who really pushed all your buttons. You're feeling guilty because you snapped back at him a couple of times, but you're afraid to say anything because you don't want to get into trouble. At the same time, you want to vent!

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #5

You think the two dispatchers across the room have been talking about you because they keep looking over at you and then whispering back and forth to each other. You decide to confront one of them about it at the end of the shift.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #6

You're talking to your co-worker. You are very excited because you are planning your first vacation in five years. You leave next week. The only thing that you worry about is the cost, because money has been tight recently.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #7

You were ordered to hold over by your supervisor, because someone called in sick for the next shift. This ruined your plans for the evening. Still, no one else could or would work it, and you haven't worked OT in a month because you've been on vacation and this is your first day back. You're talking to a co-worker.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #8

You're talking to a friend that you feel somewhat slighted by because he/she hasn't gotten together with you recently and hasn't returned calls you've left on their machine. You're worried that you upset them somehow, but you're not sure what you might have done.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #9

You are talking to an acquaintance. You have taken your car to a repair shop because it's making funny noises. You've had it in and out of this shop several times over the last several months. You're quite upset; because you think you're being given the runaround and feel that they are very condescending toward you.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #10

You're thinking about quitting your job. You and your spouse have talked about this for awhile. It would mean selling your house and moving away to live somewhere less expensive. You think you want to do this but at the same time you wonder if it is the best thing for you and your spouse. You are talking to your co-worker. Take it from there!

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #11

You're upset about the way you were treated by someone at city hall when you went to get a permit for some repair work at your home. You're talking to your friend.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #12

You're talking with a co-worker about the day you had. You had a flat tire on the way to work, causing you to be late and you got yelled at by the supervisor. The dog was sick and you had to take him to the vet. Your tax bill came and you don't have money to pay it, etc.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #13

You're talking to your co-worker about all the changes happening at your agency with expansion, new equipment, new personnel, new policies, etc. It's all very overwhelming to you.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #14

You just came in to work straight from a doctor's appointment where you found out the doctor wants to send you for some tests because they had some unusual readings on your annual physical. (Take it from there...) you're speaking with a co-worker.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #15

You're talking to a friend about your move to a new town. You've always lived in the same town and you're excited, yet also nervous, about this move.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #16

Earlier in your shift, you made a fairly serious mistake and you're really upset about it. Usually, you're really outgoing and upbeat, but this mistake is really eating at you. Even though nothing happened to the involved parties, you feel really terrible and question whether you can still do the job and keep up with all the activity levels like you once did.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #17

You are "up to here" with your kids. They are simply driving you nuts with whining, sniveling and bickering. You love them, but boy, do you need a break. You're talking to a co-worker.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #18

You're in a dilemma and you ask your friend if they have a few minutes to talk. You have an opportunity to take a new job with regular hours and holidays and weekends off. At the same time, you love what you do and you're just really torn.

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #19

You're upset about a conflict you had with a co-worker a few days ago. You're talking to a different co-worker about it. You feel like you acted like a rat. You did apologize to the person you offended, and you have tried to make up for it. Still, you keep hearing about it and you feel that you can't do any more, so why doesn't everyone just drop it!

ACTIVE LISTENING SCENARIO #20

You're talking to a friend about this: you've been working on a project for some time, you did all the surveying, the compiling, even the writing. And, it was your idea in the first place. But, someone else turned in your project with their name on it, and they got all the credit.

10 Ways To Have A Better Conversation

By: Celeste Headlee

Celeste Headlee is the host of the Georgia Public Broadcasting program "On Second Thought."
https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation

1. **Don't Multi Task.** Be present and in the moment. Don't be half in and half out of the conversation. If you don't want to be in the conversation, get out.
2. **Don't Pontificate.** If you want to state your opinion without any opportunity for response, or argument, or pushback, or growth – write a blog! Enter every conversation assuming you have something to learn. Everybody is an expert in something.
3. **Use Open Ended Questions.** Start your questions with who, what, when, where, how. Complicated questions result in simple responses. Let the speaker describe it by asking questions like: "How did that feel?" or "What was that like?" These types of questions will reveal a more thoughtful response.
4. **Go With the Flow.** Let the thoughts that come into your mind, go out of your mind. Stories and ideas will come to you – you need to let them come and then let them go.
5. **If You Don't Know, Say That You Don't Know.** Talk should not be cheap. Consider yourself "on the record". Don't make stuff up.
6. **Don't Equate Your Experience With Theirs.** It's not the same. It is NEVER the same. All experiences are individual and more importantly, it isn't about you. Conversations aren't a promotional opportunity.
7. **Try Not To Repeat Yourself.** Repeating yourself is condescending and really boring. We often have a point to make and we keep re-phrasing it over and over. Don't do that!
8. **Stay Out of the Weeds.** People don't care about all the little details: years, names, dates, etc. What they care about is you, what you are like, what you have in common. So forget the details.
9. **Listen!** This is the number one most important skill to develop. Buddha said, "If your mouth is open, you are not listening." Calvin Coolidge said, "No man ever listened his way out of a job." Why do we not listen?
 - a. We would rather talk and be in control of the conversation.
 - b. I am the center of attention
 - c. I can bolster my own identity
 - d. We get distracted. We can speak at 150-180 wpm. We can listen at 500 wpm. Our minds fill in the gaps. We don't listen with the intent to understand, we listen with the intent to reply. – Stephen R. Covey
10. **Be Brief.** "A good speech should be like a woman's skirt; long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest." – Winston Churchill. Be interested in other people.

Always be prepared to be amazed!

Listener Preference Profile

(Barker, Larry & Kittie Watson. Listen Up. NY: St. Martin's Press; 2000.)

Instructions: Think of a specific listening role or situation that you are often in. For example, you may focus on your listening at work, as a friend, as a spouse, or as a parent. As you read the series of statements below, keep the particular listening role or situation you have chosen in mind. Circle the appropriate number on your answer sheet using the key below.

Always	5
Frequently	4
Sometimes	3
Infrequently	2
Never	1

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. I focus my attention on other people's feelings when listening to them. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. When listening to others, I quickly notice if they are pleased or disappointed. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. I become involved when listening to the problems of others. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. I try to find common areas of interest when listening to new acquaintances. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. <u>I nod my head and/or use eye contact to show interest in what others are saying.</u> | <u>5 4 3 2 1</u> |
| 6. I am frustrated when others don't present their ideas in an orderly, efficient way. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. When listening to others, I focus on any inconsistencies and/or errors in what's being said. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. I jump ahead and/or finish thoughts of speakers. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. I am impatient with people who ramble on during conversations. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. <u>I ask questions to help speakers get to the point more quickly.</u> | <u>5 4 3 2 1</u> |
| 11. I wait until all the facts are presented before forming judgments and opinions. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. I prefer to listen to technical information. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. I prefer to hear facts and evidence so I can personally evaluate them. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. I like the challenge of listening to complex information. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. <u>I ask questions to probe for additional information.</u> | <u>5 4 3 2 1</u> |
| 16. When hurried, I let others know that I have a limited amount of time to listen. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. I begin a discussion by telling others how long I have to meet. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. I interrupt others when I feel time pressure. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. I look at my watch or clocks in the room when I have limited time to listen to others. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. When I feel time pressure, my ability to concentrate on what others are saying suffers. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Scoring & Interpretation

Tally the number of times you circled 4 or 5 for statements 1-5.

Tally the number of times you circled 4 or 5 for statements 6-10.

Tally the number of times you circled 4 or 5 for statements 11-15.

Tally the number of times you circled 4 or 5 for statements 16-20.

People-oriented = _____

Action-oriented = _____

Content-oriented = _____

Time-oriented = _____

PEOPLE-ORIENTED CHARACTERISTICS

Strengths:

- cares and is concerned about others
- is nonjudgmental
- provides clear and verbal and nonverbal feedback signals
- identifies emotional states of others
- interested in building relationships
- notices moods in others quickly

Weaknesses:

- becomes over involved with the feelings of other
- avoids seeing faults in others
- internalizes/adopts emotional states of others
- is intrusive to others
- is overly expressive when giving feedback
- is nondiscriminating in building relationships

ACTION-ORIENTED CHARACTERISTICS

Strengths:

- gets to the heart of the matter quickly
- gives clear feedback concerning expectations
- concentrates energy on understanding task at hand
- helps others focus on what is important
- encourages others to be organized and concise
- identifies inconsistencies in messages

Weaknesses:

- tends to be impatient with rambling speakers
- jumps ahead and moves to conclusions quickly
- gets distracted easily by unorganized speakers
- asks blunt questions of others
- appears overly critical
- minimizes emotional issues and concerns

CONTENT-ORIENTED CHARACTERISTICS

Strengths:

- values technical information
- tests for clarity and understanding
- encourages others to provide support for their ideas
- welcomes complex and challenging information
- looks at all sides of an issue

Weaknesses:

- is overly detail-oriented
- may intimidate others by asking pointed questions
- minimizes the value of nontechnical information
- devalues information from unknown individuals
- takes a long time to make decisions

TIME-ORIENTED CHARACTERISTICS

Strengths:

- manages and saves time effectively
- lets others know listening time requirements
- sets time guidelines for meetings and conversations
- discourages wordy speakers from wasting time
- gives cues to others when time is being wasted

Weaknesses:

- tends to be impatient with time wasters
- interrupts others, putting a strain on relationships
- lets time affect the ability to concentrate
- rushes speakers by frequently looking at watches/clocks
- limits creativity in others by imposing time pressure

About 20 percent of us indicate little or no listening preferences on the Listener Preference Profile. If you scored **zero** in all categories, you may prefer not to gain information through listening, in certain environments and contexts. The lack of any listening preference is termed “**listening avoidance**.” This is not necessarily a negative trait but can cause problems in extreme cases. Two of the most common causes of listening avoidance are introversion and burnout.