



Listen UP

How to be an Active Listener



The majority of what we **hear** is only committed to memory for mere seconds. **Listening** means actively thinking about, understanding, and remembering what we hear. **Active Listening** could help you become a better listener and make your time in class, work meetings, or even listening to an informative podcast more effective!

BARRIERS TO LISTENING

Physiological

Your health (including hunger, thirst, tiredness) and comfort can cause issues with concentration. Find a good seat in your class and take care of your physical needs before class begins.

Psychological

Grief, stress, and other emotional conflict can affect your concentration. Take time to address your mental health, be it a personal care day, therapy, your favorite masseuse, or another stress-relieving activity. Your wellbeing is important for you and your studies.

Expertise

Not everyone has the same expertise. To prepare for your class, preview the chapter in your textbook to make sure you have a basic understanding of the topic and aren't caught off-guard when new vocabulary comes up. This will improve your ability to comprehend the content you're listening to. If you still don't understand something, note it and look it up later.

Environmental

Distractions affect concentration and accuracy. What distracts a person varies, so whether it's desk clutter or your phone, learn what keeps your focus split and remove it from the equation.

Perspective

When a person learns something one way their whole life, it can be difficult to accept new information or points of view. This is particularly true for controversial topics—but you still need to be informed. Try to keep an open mind and listen to what the presenter is saying, even if it conflicts with your own opinions. You don't have to agree with what is said, but you should try to understand the different perspective.

IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING

Suspend Interruptions

Don't interrupt. If you are asking a question or forming an argument you are focusing on what you want to say, not on what is being said. It breaks the flow of information and makes it harder for you to absorb. Evaluate the information once the speaker is finished—you might even have had some of your questions answered naturally!

Clarify Misunderstandings

Write down anything you don't understand or want to know more about so you can ask the teacher, a classmate, a tutor, or consult your textbook after the speaker is done. The library and phone apps for dictionaries are great resources for this.

Confirm Information

When you're actively listening, you will be able to summarize what the speaker said in your own words. If you're listening one-on-one, you can do this directly to the speaker and it will give the speaker an opportunity to correct any misinformation. In class, confirm your understanding with a classmate at an appropriate moment, or with a study group after your class.

Build Rapport

When you actively listen, you show the speaker that you care about what they have to say and that they are making a difference when they speak to you. Showing that you're actively listening can help build a respectful relationship between you and the speaker. Doing so could mean more resources, the benefit of the doubt when it comes to grades, or even references for jobs once you're out of school. Active listening helps create professional relationships in class and out.