



Active Listening

Listening is receiving information from another source and interpreting the information. So what is active listening then? This is where interpreting the information becomes important. Active listening is when you are consciously trying to comprehend the message that another individual is talking about. When you are not actively listening, messages can be misconstrued and consequently, conflict may arise. Well isn't listening and active listening the same thing? Not necessarily. It is shown that an individual only comprehends 25-50% of what they "listen" to. When you are making a conscious effort to understand the message of a conversation you comprehend almost all of the conversation! More specifically, active listening is essential in the work place because it leads to improved customer relations and productivity with few mistakes.

Majority of us have difficulty with active listening because, let's face it, it takes a lot of effort! How do you become a better active listener? Here are some guidelines to follow to become a more efficient active listener. By following this outline, you will become a proactive listener in no time!

- *Pay attention* – put all distracting mental and environmental factors aside and listen to the individual you are conversing with. This includes not talking! Listen! Try to understand the message that the other person is trying to convey. Everyone can spit out the definition of a word, but what's the big picture?
- *Show that you are paying attention* – use body language to convey to your speaker that you are paying attention. This may include facing the speaker and giving them eye contact, facial expressions such as a smile, and nodding occasionally. Not only does this show your speaker that you are listening to what they have to say, but now the speaker can focus on the message they want to convey instead of worrying if you are paying attention.
- *When the speaker is done talking, provide feedback without judgement* – avoid having bias opinions toward the message that the speaker is discussing. If you do not understand clearly what another individual is trying to say, ask for clarification! For example, inform the speaker about what you understand the message to be and ask them to verify if that is correct or not. If not, ask the speaker to elaborate.
- *Wait your turn* – do not interrupt the speaker when they are talking. Be an active listener and work to comprehend the message they are trying to present.

Having difficulty? Try to mentally repeat what the speaker is saying and interpret the main message of the conversation. Repetition will make you more in tuned to what the speaker is saying and the message of the conversation is more likely to stick in your mind.



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Resources:

<http://powertochange.com/students/people/listen/>

<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

<http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html>

