

# Develop Effective Listening Skill

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## Abstract

Learning any language is an art, which involves four major skills called Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. It is popularly known as LSRW skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. This paper aims at presenting some details regarding what is listening, what is hearing, what is the difference between these two, various types of listening, how listening enhances the overall communication, what are the methods adopted for developing listening skill, factors involved in effective listening, attitudes to develop to achieve better listening, responsibilities shared by the speakers and listeners, etc. This paper focuses on these points and discusses the relationship between speakers and listeners.

## What is Listening?

Listening is generally defined as a conscious, cognitive effort involving primarily the sense of hearing and leading to interpretation and understanding.

We listen with our senses to understand the communication being uttered. Our goal is to understand what is being uttered. We want to understand the words and sentences and through this understanding retrieve the intent the speaker had while he or she communicated. In other words, we try to identify speaker's views and analyze his or her views to work out a coherent picture of the communication we face. It is a difficult process, in which what is heard is weighed, analyzed, sorted, related, classified, evaluated as well as judged.

Listening is the most often used skill of communication and good listening is an integrated part of the communication process.

**Ten Steps Suggested** <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html>

1. Stop Talking
2. Prepare Yourself to Listen
3. Put the Speaker at Ease
4. Remove Distractions
5. Empathise
6. Be Patient
7. Avoid Personal Prejudice
8. Listen to the Tone
9. Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words

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## 10. Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication

The above suggestions are worth following. We need to act these out in the classroom through practice. Such practices will enable our students to carry the skill of listening into their work place in future.

### **Types of Listening**

Dr. John A. Kline suggests the following types of listening (<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/kline-listen/b10ch4.htm>). The quotes are taken from Dr. Kline's work cited here:

#### **Informative Listening**

The goal of Informative listening to understand the message. "Listeners are successful insofar as the meaning they assign to messages is as close as possible to that which the sender intended."

#### **Relationship Listening**

"The purpose of relationship listening is either to help an individual or to improve the relationship between people. Therapeutic listening is a special type of relationship listening."

#### **Appreciative Listening**

"Appreciative listening includes listening to music for enjoyment, to speakers because you like their style, to your choices in theater, television, radio, or film. It is the response of the listener, not the source of the message, that defines appreciative listening."

#### **Critical Listening**

"The ability to listen critically is essential in a democracy. On the job, in the community, at service clubs, in places of worship, in the family—there is practically no place you can go where critical listening is unimportant."

#### **Discriminative Listening**

"The final type of listening is discriminative listening. It may be the most important type, for it is basic to the other four. By being sensitive to changes in the speaker's rate, volume, force, pitch, and emphasis, the informative listener can detect even nuances of difference in meaning. By sensing the impact of certain responses, such as "uh huh," or "I see," relationship listening can be strengthened."

I would like to add empathic learning as a specific category to the list suggested above.

#### **Empathic Listening**

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In order for us to become good listeners, we need to develop empathic listening. The goal of empathetic listening is to really hear the other person, to begin to see things as he or she sees them, rather than looking at what he or she is saying only from your point of view.

This is a very important skill for all supervisors. Anyone who aspires to become a leader in any company needs to have this skill.

Empathic listening does not mean, however, that we don't evaluate the content of the message. This means that we hold any critical remark until we truly understand the nature and essence of the spoken message which we are listening to.

Listening empathetically does not mean that we agree with the speakers; it does not mean that we disagree with them; it means that we try to understand the issues from the speaker's point of view.

### **Important Factors for Empathetic Listening**

1. One should realize that people are all individuals with their own values, feelings and experiences.
2. Should listen attentively to the fellow communicators;
3. Should see their points of view.
4. Should sense their values.
5. Should encourage them to express themselves fully.
6. Should paraphrase the concepts for their satisfaction.
7. Should speak for us finally, not in the beginning.

### **Differences between Listening and Hearing**

Listening	Hearing
Voluntary	Involuntary
Requires conscious efforts	Happens automatically
Active process	Passive process
The listener plays a very active part	Listener plays a passive part
A two way interactive process	One-way process.

## To Conclude

All of us know that without specific training even intelligent people may be very poor listeners. Ralph G. Nichols at the University of Minnesota was the first person to experiment with specific training in listening techniques. In his studies it was found that after training, every group of students improved at least 25% in ability to understand the spoken words and some improved as much as 40%. He declared: “The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.”

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/167082-the-most-basic-of-all-human-needs-is-the-need> The evidence is clear that after training in efficient listening methods and techniques hearers can turn out to be true listeners. Let us become true listeners and not simple hearers.

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## References

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/kline-listen/b10ch4.htm>

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/167082-the-most-basic-of-all-human-needs-is-the-need>

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