

Listening Skills

The average college student spends about 14 hours per week in class listening (or perhaps I should say "hearing" there is a difference!) to lectures. See if you can improve your listening skills by following some of the strategies below:

Maintain eye contact with the instructor. Of course you will need to look at your notebook to write your notes, but eye contact keeps you focused on the job at hand and keeps you involved in the lecture.

Focus on content, not delivery. Have you ever counted the number of times a teacher clears his/her throat in a fifteen minute period? If so, you weren't focusing on content.

Avoid emotional involvement. When you are too emotionally involved in listening, you tend to hear what you want to hear not what is actually being said. Try to remain objective and open minded.

Avoid distractions. Don't let your mind wander or be distracted by the person shuffling papers near you. If the classroom is too hot or too cold try to remedy that situation if you can. The solution may require that you dress more appropriately to the room temperature.

Treat listening as a challenging mental task. Listening to an academic lecture is not a passive act at least it shouldn't be. You need to concentrate on what is said so that you can process the information into your notes.

Stay active by asking mental questions. Active listening keeps you on your toes. Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you listen. What key point is the professor making? How does this fit with what I know from previous lectures? How is this lecture organized?

Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought. You can think faster than the lecturer can talk. That's one reason your mind may tend to wander. All the above suggestions will help you keep your mind occupied and focused on what being said. You can actually begin to anticipate what the professor is going to say as a way to keep your mind from straying. Your mind does have the capacity to listen, think, write and ponder at the same time, but it does take practice.

http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/strat/ss_listening.html

Good Listeners Listen with Their Faces

The first skill that you can practice to be a good listener is to act like a good listener. We have spent a lot of our modern lives working at tuning out all of the information that is thrust at us. It therefore becomes important to change our physical body language from that of a deflector to that of a receiver, much like a satellite dish. Our faces contain most of the receptive equipment in our bodies, so it is only natural that we should tilt our faces towards the channel of information.

A second skill is to use the other bodily receptors besides your ears. You can be a better listener when you look at the other person. Your eyes pick up the non-verbal signals that all people send out when they are speaking. By looking at the speaker, your eyes will also complete the eye contact that speakers are trying to make. A speaker will work harder at sending out the information when they see a receptive audience in attendance. Your eyes help complete the communication circuit that must be established between speaker and listener.

When you have established eye and face contact with your speaker, you must then react to the speaker by sending out non-verbal signals. Your face must move and give the range of emotions that indicate whether you are following what the speaker has to say. By moving your face to the information, you can better concentrate on what the person is saying. Your face must become an active and contoured catcher of information.

It is extremely difficult to receive information when your mouth is moving information out at the same time. A good listener will stop talking and use receptive language instead. Use the I see . . . un huh . . . oh really words and phrases that follow and encourage your speaker's train of thought. This forces you to react to the ideas presented, rather than the person. You can then move to asking questions, instead of giving your opinion on the information being presented. It is a true listening skill to use your mouth as a moving receptor of information rather than a broadcaster.

A final skill is to move your mind to concentrate on what the speaker is saying. You cannot fully hear their point of view or process information when you argue mentally or judge what they are saying before they have completed. An open mind is a mind that is receiving and listening to information.

If you really want to listen, you will act like a good listener. Good listeners are good catchers because they give their speakers a target and then move that target to capture the information that is being sent. When good listeners aren't understanding their speakers, they will send signals to the speaker about what they expect next, or how the speaker can change the speed of information delivery to suit the listener. Above all, a good listener involves all of their face to be an active moving listener.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. If you are really listening intently, you should feel tired after your speaker has finished. Effective listening is an active rather than a passive activity.
2. When you find yourself drifting away during a listening session, change your body position and concentrate on using one of the above skills. Once one of the skills is being used, the other active skills will come into place as well.
3. Your body position defines whether you will have the chance of being a good listener or a good deflector. Good listeners are like poor boxers: they lead with their faces.
4. Meaning cannot just be transmitted as a tangible substance by the speaker. It must also be stimulated or aroused in the receiver. The receiver must therefore be an active participant for the cycle of communication to be complete.