

8 Simple Ways to Be a Better Listener

1. Pay Attention.

A good listener is attentive. They're not looking at their watch, phone, or thinking about their afternoon plans. They're focused and paying attention to what the other person is saying. This is called [active listening](#).

According to Skills You Need, “active listening involves listening with all senses. As well as giving full attention to the speaker, it is important that the ‘active listener’ is also ‘seen’ to be listening—otherwise, the speaker may conclude that what they are talking about is uninteresting to the listener.”

It's normal for the mind to wander. We're human, after all. But a good listener will rein those thoughts back in as soon as they notice their attention waning.

I want to note here that you can also “listen” to bodily cues. You can assume that if someone keeps looking at their watch or over their shoulder, their focus isn't on the conversation. The key is to just pay attention.

2. Use Positive Body Language

This is obviously more challenging during remote times. However, it is important to understand that you can infer a lot from a person's body language. Are they interested, bored, or anxious?

A good listener's body language is open. They lean forward and express curiosity in what is being said. Their facial expression is either smiling, showing concern, conveying empathy, etc. They're letting the speaker know that they're being heard.

People say things for a reason—they want some type of feedback. For example, you tell your friend, “I had a really rough day!” and your friend continues to check his phone while nodding his head. Not a good response.

“An active listener pays full attention to the speaker and ensures they understand the information being delivered. You can't be distracted by an incoming call or social media update. You have to be present and in the moment.

Body language is an important tool to ensure you do this. The correct body language makes you a better active listener and therefore more ‘open’ and receptive to what the speaker is saying. At the same time, it indicates that you are listening to them.”

3. Avoid Interrupting the Speaker

Interrupting is a sign of disrespect. It is essentially saying, “what I have to say is much more important than what you’re saying.” When you interrupt the speaker, they feel frustrated, hurried, and unimportant.

Interrupting a speaker to agree, disagree, argue, etc., causes the speaker to lose track of what they are saying. It’s extremely frustrating. Whatever you have to say can wait until the other person is done.

Be polite and wait your turn!

4. Ask Questions

[Asking questions](#) is one of the best ways to show you’re interested. If someone is telling you about their ski trip, don’t respond with, “that’s nice.” That would show a lack of interest and disrespect. Instead, you can ask, “how long have you been skiing?” “Did you find it difficult to learn?” “What was your favorite part of the trip?” etc. The person will think highly of you and consider you a great conversationalist just by you asking a few questions.

5. Just Listen

This may seem counterintuitive. When you’re conversing with someone, it’s usually back and forth. On occasion, all that is required of you is to listen, smile, or nod your head, and your speaker will feel like they’re really being heard and understood.

6. Remember and Follow Up

Part of being a great listener is remembering what the speaker has said to you, then following up with them.

It’s so simple to show you care. Just remember a few facts and follow up on them. If you do this regularly, you will make more friends because you will show that you care about their stories and demonstrate that you are a good listener.

7. Keep Confidential Information Confidential

If you really want to be a better listener, listen with care. If what you’re hearing is confidential, keep it that way, no matter how tempting it might be to tell someone else, especially if you have friends in common. Being a good listener means being [trustworthy](#) and sensitive with shared information.

Whatever is told to you in confidence is not to be revealed. Assure your speaker that their information is safe with you. They will feel relieved that they have someone with whom they can share their burden without fear of it getting out.

Keeping someone’s confidence helps to deepen your relationship. Also, “one of the most important elements of confidentiality is that it helps to build and develop trust.

8. Maintain Eye Contact

When someone is talking, they are usually saying something they consider meaningful. They don't want their listener reading a text, looking at their fingernails, or bending down to pet a dog on the street. A speaker wants all eyes on them. It lets them know that what they're saying has value.

Eye contact is very powerful. It can relay many things without anything being said. Currently, it's more important than ever with the Covid-19 Pandemic. People can't see your whole face, but they can definitely read your eyes.

By eye contact, I don't mean a hard, creepy stare—just a gaze in the speaker's direction will do. Make it a point the next time you're in a conversation to maintain eye contact with your speaker.

Final Thoughts

Listening attentively will add to your connection with anyone in your life. Now, more than ever, when people are so disconnected due to smartphones and social media, listening skills are critical.

You can build better, more honest, and deeper relationships by simply being there, paying attention, and asking questions that make the speaker feel like what they have to say matters.

And isn't that a great goal? To make people feel as if they matter.

Take these tips now and use them when you interview someone to better understand what makes them unique.

More Tips on How to Be a Better Listener

- [How to Practice Active Listening \(A Step-By-Step Guide\)](#)
- [Active Listening vs Passive Listening: Is One Better Than the Other?](#)
- [The Purpose of Listening: To Understand, Not Reply](#)

Source:

<https://www.lifhack.org/articles/communication/5-simple-ways-to-be-a-better-listener.html>