

The Do's and Don'ts Of Good Listening

Good Listeners:

Do Little of the Talking

Use Positive Body Language

- Make good eye contact, lean forward, keep arms open, take notes if appropriate

Keep an Open Mind

- Avoid asking “why” (“Why didn’t you?”)
- Wait for the speaker to finish, then analyze
- Keep an open mind (not allowing biases or opinions to interfere with listening)

Tolerate

- A pause in the conversation is not uncomfortable

Avoid Distractions

- Ignore the phone ringing or turn the phone off
- Make you feel that they are there for you

Ask Questions that Encourage Dialogue

- Open ended questions (“Tell me about...”)
- Questions that guide the subordinate (“Do you think this might be the best way to handle this, or would you like to try...?”)
- Use some close-ended questions (“Do you think that will work?”)

Observe and Listen Hard

- Observe and interpret body language and respond appropriately
- Read between the lines (Example: subordinate seems afraid or embarrassed to ask for a raise, supervisor provides compliment for talking about it.)

Repeat the Speaker's Thoughts

- Let speaker know the message was received (paraphrase in listener's own words)

Listen for Facts and Key Words

- Zero in on words that are repeated

Poor Listeners:

Do Most of the Talking

Use Negative Body Language

- Make little eye contact, fold arms, fidget, look at watch, read or use computer while listening

Judge

- Ask “why” (“Why didn’t you?”)
- Interrupt the speaker
- Let personal biases and opinions interrupt the dialogue

Disallow silence

- Silence is uncomfortable

Allow Distractions to Interrupt Listening

- Answer the Phone
- Talk to Others

Ask Few Questions, Lecture

- Jump in with opinion, respond right away
- Give instructions (“You ought to...”)
- Are quick with solutions

Listen Only for Ideas (Opinions)

- Are deaf to emotions behind them
- Are bored by people's conversations
- Are passive listeners
- Are inaccurate listeners (do not watch for facial expressions, don't make eye contact and usually misinterpret the message)

Do Not Consider Feelings

- Provide response that doesn't address the real issue

Think About What to Say Next

- Insensitive to what is really being said