

CHECKLIST FOR IMPROVING LISTENING¹

- Stop talking. Accept the role of listener by concentrating on the speaker's words, not on what your response will be.
- Work hard at listening. Become actively involved; expect to learn something.
- Block out competing thoughts. Concentrate on the message. Don't allow yourself to daydream during lag time.
- Control the listening environment. Turn off the TV, close the windows, and move to a quiet location. Tell the speaker when you cannot hear.
- Maintain an open mind. Know your biases, and try to correct for them. Be tolerant of less able and different-looking speakers.
- Provide verbal and nonverbal feedback. Encourage the speaker with comments like "Yes," "I see," "Okay," and "Uh-huh," and ask polite questions. Look alert by leaning forward.
- Paraphrase the speaker's ideas. Silently repeat the message in your own words, sort out the main points, and identify supporting details. In conversation, sum up the main points to confirm what was said.
- Take selective notes. If you are hearing instructions or important data, record the major points; then, verify your notes with the speaker.
- Listen between the lines. Observe nonverbal cues, and interpret the feelings of the speaker. What is really being said?
- Capitalize on lag time. Use spare moments to organize, review, anticipate, challenge, and weigh the evidence.