

Ten Commandments for Good Listening

1. **Stop talking!** You cannot listen if you are talking.
2. **Show others that you want to listen.** Look and act interested. Don't busy yourself with other things. While the speaker is talking, don't listen to other conversations; look out the window, etc. Be interested in what is being said.
3. **Listen for content.** Be objective and open minded when listening. Avoid reacting emotionally to what is said. Try to put yourself in their place to see their point of view. If a speaker mispronounces words, uses off-color language, or brings up a disagreeable topic, try to keep an open mind.
4. **Don't interrupt.** Be patient and try to understand what is being said without hurrying the speaker or interrupting in the middle of a sentence. Allow plenty of time.
5. **Resist criticizing what is said.** Putting the speaker on the defensive will only make him or her stop talking, or become hostile. Avoid arguing because even if you win the disagreement, you will have lost the conversation.
6. **Gain ideas.** Be open and listen to something, no matter how unimportant it might seem to you. Concentrate on how the subject relates to the person's life.
7. **Listen for new ideas.** Many times something out of the ordinary might be said in passing. Don't overlook small details that could become significant considerations if they are discussed in more detail.
8. **Realize that thinking is faster than talking.** Challenge yourself and capitalize on the fact that you can out-think a slow speaker. Don't daydream and let your mind drift if you are with a speaker who is slow to explain, but make a mental summary of what is being said. Turn this negative situation into a positive one by utilizing the extra time to notice if the speaker's body language, voice tone, and sentence content all agree.
9. **Ask questions.** This shows you are really listening. You find the subject interesting enough to want to know more. It helps to develop points further and is essential for clarification.
10. **Stop talking!** First and last because all others depend on it. You simply can't be a good listener while you are talking.