



Essential Listening Tips

Develop the desire to listen. Really listening to someone is a wonderful gift to give.

Let the other person do most of the talking. Applying the 70/30 rule ensures this will happen. You listen 70% of the time and you talk 30%.

Avoid interrupting. There is always the temptation to interrupt so you can tell the other person something you think is vitally important. When you are about to speak, ask yourself, is it really necessary?

Learn active listening. It's not enough that you're listening to someone – you want to be sure that they know you are listening. Active listening is the art of communicating to the other person that you are hearing their every word.

Ask for clarification if needed. This will clear up any misunderstanding you have.

Get used to “listening” for nonverbal messages – body language. The other person may be communicating with you via body language. You need to decode the message.

Ask a question---then be quiet. This is a foolproof way to listen. Think of yourself as an interviewer.

Tips for asking Questions

Once you have learned how to keep yourself from speaking, the art of asking questions is the shortcut to effective listening. Here are some tips for asking questions:

Ask open-ended questions. Questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. “How can we do this?” “What do you think?” Your objective is to get them to talk as much as possible.

Don't ask questions that put them on the defensive. For example, “why?” is intimidating. Don't ask “why?” ask “how come?”

Ask “what if?” What if we did it this way?

Ask for their advice. “What would you suggest we do to resolve this?” Everyone loves to be asked for advice.

Offer alternatives. “Which way would you prefer?” This demonstrates your respect for the other person.

Ask about their feelings. “How do you feel about this?” People love to have their feelings validated.

Repeat back what they said. “Let me be sure I understand what you are saying. You are saying that...?” This technique will prevent misunderstandings and convince them that you really are listening.