

# Listening Skills

*The best salespeople are great listeners — that's how you find out what the buyer wants. (Larry Wilson)*  
*You learn when you listen. You earn when you listen — not just money, but respect. (Harvey Mackay)*  
*A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he knows something. (Wilson Mizer)*

The Department of Labor identifies listening skills as a foundational skill important for success in the work world. Hearing is considered a physical ability — but, listening is a skill.

Listening skills makes our friends, coworkers, and employers feel worthy, appreciated, and respected. As a result of listening skills, your conversations with people become real. Then, relationships improve. One of the ways to create and keep good relationships at work is to improve your listening skills. Listening skills are an extension of the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you). To know how to listen to someone else — think about how you would want another to listen to you.



## Why are listening skills important in the work world?

- Listening skills help you answer questions correctly.
- Listening skills show you support and respect the job and company.
- Listening skills help you work in a team environment during the work shift.
- Listening skills help you better understand what supervisors and coworkers expect of you.
- Listening skills help you build good relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and customers.
- Listening skills help you resolve (solve) problems with customers, coworkers, and supervisors.
- Listening skills help you find the real meaning of what customers, coworkers, or supervisor say.
- Listening skills show others that you are a caring, interested, and smart person.



Listening helps you to understand others — their views, problems, and situations. With listening skills, conflict and tensions are reduced between groups of people such as family members, coworkers, or friends.

**When you listen and understand**, others think of you as a person they want to know and be around. In addition, listening helps you learn new things each day.

Listening skills have three steps: 1) "Hearing" (listening to the words of the talker). 2) "Understanding" (making sense of the talker's ideas). 3) "Evaluating" (adding your thoughts, ideas, and evaluations to the talker's presentation).



## How do you show others that you have good listening skills?

**Calm Appearance and Smile:** Good listeners show they are listening by facial expressions and smiles that say, "I like you and enjoy listening to you talk." Listeners show interest by body language such as relaxing arms rather than crossing them at the chest, leaning slightly forward, nodding the head in agreement, and saying affirmations such as "Yes, I understand."

**Positive Comments:** Good listeners make positive comments in a not-too-loud and not-too-soft tone that proves they are listening. These comments include “uh huh,” “wow,” “interesting,” and “what happened then?” and “I understand.” Also, comments to encourage talkers to continue talking. These include, “That’s interesting. Tell me more.” and “Tell me about it.”



**Reflective Comments:** Reflective comments encourage talkers to keep talking.

**The listener reflects back** the talker’s thoughts just like a mirror. For example, the talker might say, “I bought a new TV last night.” A reflective listener would say, “You bought a TV?” Or, when the talker says, “I’m looking for a new apartment. I can’t stand the traffic noise anymore,” the listener would reflect with “You’re unhappy with where you are living?” Reflective comments are used by professionals such as psychologists and counselors to encourage a person to talk.

**Eye Contact:** Good listening requires looking at the talker’s eyes as well as listening to what is being said. In fact, most talkers don’t feel they are being heard unless the listener is making eye contact. For example, the parent who says, “Look at me when I’m talking to you” feels ignored by lack of eye contact.



**Patience (ability to wait without complaint or anger):** A listener show patience by allowing the talker to finish the point the talker wants to make. Do not interrupt by saying your thoughts. Offer your thoughts when the talker is done. Or, if you do need to interrupt, do so politely. Put your hand up and say, "May I interrupt to ask you to clarify something?"

*Most of the successful people I've know are the ones who do more listening than talking (B. Baruch)  
Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*

*(Winston Churchill)*

### **QUICK CHECK:**

1. Why are the best salespeople great listeners?
2. What do you **earn** when you listen?
3. Where is a good listener popular?
4. a) What is a physical ability? b) What is a skill?
5. a) What 3 things do listening skills make others feel? b) As a result, what do your conversations become? c) What then improves?
6. Of what are listening skills an extension?
7. What happens when you listen and understand?
8. List 3 of of the 8 reasons why listening skills are important in the work world.
9. List and describe the 3 steps in listening skills.
10. What do good listener's facial expressions and smiles say to the speaker?
11. Give 3 examples of correct body language to show that you are listening.
12. Give 3 examples of positive comments that show you are listening.
13. What do reflective comments encourage?
14. What does the listener reflect back?
15. Give an example of what a talker says, and what a reflective listener would say back.
16. What 2 professions use reflective comments?
17. Write a reflective comment for the following statements: (a) I’m so happy. I finally bought a new car last night! (b) I’m having problems with my dad. He’s upset about my new boyfriend.
18. How do most talkers feel when there is no eye contact from the listener?
19. Define "patience."
20. How does a listener show patience?
21. Describe what you do and say if you need to interrupt.
22. Baruch: What do successful people do?
23. Churchill: List 2 things it takes courage to do.