

Become a better listener



- 1. Engage the person**

Lean towards the other person to show that you're interested. If you are on the phone, encourage them by using words such as 'yes' or 'mmm'.
- 2. Maintain eye contact**

Look into their eyes, and encourage them with nods or neutral facial expressions.
- 3. Don't get distracted**

Good listening means being able to fully understand what the other person is saying. Turn off your mobile phone and make sure that no-one can interrupt you. If you're on the phone, close your eyes so that you are not distracted by any visual stimuli.
- 4. Listen for tone**

The way the other person speaks can provide subtle give-aways about what they're actually saying. Listen for tension, hesitancy and pitch for clues.
- 5. Listen for meaning**

Judge what is being said - not just how it is being said. Some people are very good orators but may not be talking any sense!
- 6. Ask open questions**

By asking open questions (such as 'Tell me about...'), you will allow the other person to respond in a non-judgemental way and therefore understand them more fully.
- 7. Separate facts from feelings**

Emotions drive everything we do. When you are listening to someone, try to differentiate between the emotional content of what they're saying and the factual element.
- 8. Watch for body language**

Concentrate on what the other person is saying, and how they are saying it. Up to 50% of communication is non-verbal, so the other person's body language can speak louder than their words.
- 9. Keep quiet**

By keeping quiet, you're allowing the other person time to express themselves fully. Generally, people are not comfortable with silence and so, by keeping quiet, you encourage them to continue talking.
- 10. Keep your interruptions to a minimum**

Try not to interrupt when the other person is talking. If you interrupt, you are, in effect, saying "Shut up; my view is more important than yours". Wait until the person has finished what they are saying before you comment.

- 11. *Avoid jumping to conclusions***
Don't assume you know what the other person is going to say next.
- 12. *Summarise to clarify***
Once the other person has finished what they are saying, summarise your understanding. A clear understanding will reassure the other person that you are listening fully.
- 13. *Take notes at the right time***
Although taking notes is often an important requirement, when you're taking notes, you are not listening. Try to let the other person finish before you take notes. You can then use this opportunity to summarise what you've heard before committing it to paper.
- 14. *Keep an open mind***
Be aware of your own biases and prejudices so that you don't let them influence your understanding of what's being said.
- 15. *Keep your emotions in check***
Try to create an objective state of mind that will keep your emotions in check.

