



# Listening - The Neglected Art

Almost everyone can hear, but few can really listen well. We speak at about 125 words per minute and we are capable of hearing and understanding at four or five times as great a speed. But few people can achieve this goal because they have not mastered the skills necessary for listening.

Listening is the second part of any effective communication interchange and is the part that is frequently taken for granted. One assumes that listening is something that just happens. Many people fail to recognize the difference between passive listening and active listening.

Active listening occurs when the listener makes a conscious effort to get as much of the message as possible. Sometimes one falls into active listening as when in the grip of a powerful speaker. Many times, one must listen to speakers or attend meetings that may be dull, lengthy, or poorly delivered. It takes a strong will to decide in cases such as these to get whatever is valuable out of what the person is saying.

## There are a variety of methods to check for active listening.

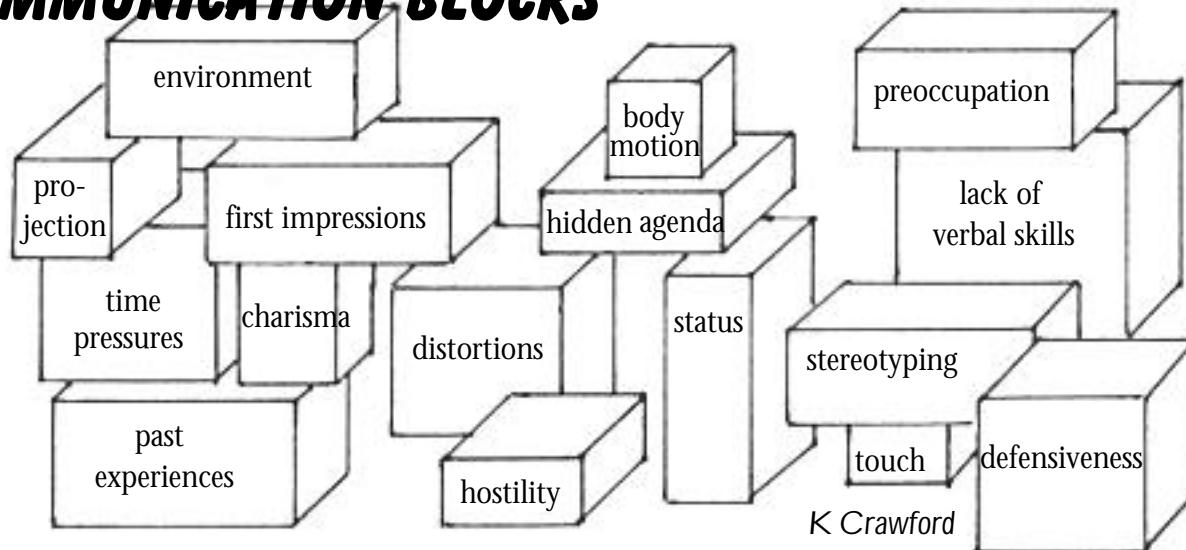
- ✓ STOP TALKING. It is impossible to listen if you are talking.
- ✓ Put the speaker at ease...relax and help the other person feel free to communicate. Show the speaker that you want to listen by looking and acting interested.
- ✓ Concentrate! Be sure to ignore those background noises or thoughts of lunch.
- ✓ Keep an open mind. Don't be too quick to judge. Frequently one decides in the first couple of minutes whether to listen to a speaker or not. The speaker with a wandering opening, a lisp or accent, or a poor delivery often does not stand a chance of being "heard." Making these kinds of snap decisions ignores the next question...
- ✓ BE PATIENT - Allow plenty of time for the speaker. Do not interrupt.
- ✓ What is the speaker saying that is valuable to me? Is there anything at all in the message that I can use?
- ✓ Hold your temper - angry words and feeling can hurt and can last a lifetime.
- ✓ Don't be prejudiced when listening - when the speaker is for or against someone's favorite things, the listener frequently gets so involved with his or her anger or enthusiasm that he or she misses the message.
- ✓ STOP TALKING - An open ear is worth much more than an open mouth, so listen!

# Listening Habits

Positive	Negative
Tune in to see if there is anything you can use	Call the subject uninteresting
Get the speaker's message--this is more important than delivery, appearance, etc.	Criticize the speaker's delivery, appearance, etc.
Hear the speaker out before judging him or her	Get overstimulated and prepare rebuttal
Listen for main ideas, concepts and principles	Listen only for specific facts
Listen for a few minutes before taking notes	Try to make an outline of everything you hear
Good listening is not relaxed... there is a collection of tensions inside	Fake attention to the speaker
Do something about distraction--shut a window, request the speaker to talk louder, etc.	Tolerate distractions
Learn to listen and take in difficult material	Evade difficult material
Identify and overlook word barriers	Let emotion-laden words affect your listening

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# COMMUNICATION BLOCKS



- **Physical Traits** - the actual physical looks or characteristics of the individuals involved
- **Status** - communication breaks down because of the way individuals perceive persons in power (fear of being perceived as unintelligent; telling a teacher what he/she wants to hear; etc.)
- **First Impression** - gauge what we expect of a person by the impression we first formed
- **Stereotyping** - grouping people into classes and roles we create and find it hard to change our perceptions even when the facts prove otherwise
- **Objects** - physical objects such as clothes, jewelry, etc. are distracting
- **Projection** - project our own inadequacies and paranoia to someone else, whether they exist for that person or not
- **Body Motion** - body gestures, including facial expressions draw away attention
- **Preoccupation** - mind-wandering, where we only half listen. Engrossed in external events, etc.
- **Hostility** - anger from a previous situation comes with us and we are not able to put it out of our mind
- **Charisma** - the charm of the sender affects how the message is received
- **Past Experiences** - we prejudge situations according to what has happened to us in the past
- **Touch** - the effect of physical touch is distracting
- **Hidden Agenda** - a person with a special interest hears only messages advances that idea, rejecting all else without evaluation
- **Lack of Verbal Skill** - the message is dismissed due to poor articulation, tone of voice, rate of speech, use of pauses, etc.
- **Environment** - physical conditions may hamper communication (hunger, noise, weather, etc.)
- **Defensiveness** - insecurities help receiver distort questions into accusations
- **Space** - the distance between the persons communication
- **Time Pressures** - reference or use of time during the interaction
- **Distortions** - receiver misunderstands ideas in the message and/or the sender doesn't recognize feedback