

8 Features of Effective Listening

1. **FOCUS** on the speaker. Give them undivided attention.
2. **NONVERBAL** behaviors. Make sure they reinforce you are giving the speaker your undivided attention.
3. **PROBING** questions. Ask questions to clarify your understanding, even if you think you do understand!
4. **SUMMARIZE AND PARAPHRASE** what the speaker is saying. Two reasons: to make sure you did receive the message they intended; and to reinforce or correct it.
5. **EMPATHIZE**. Put yourself in the speaker/messenger's "shoes".
6. **HOLD JUDGMENT/PERSONAL BIAS**. Do not project your feelings or ideas.
7. **UNDERSTAND CULTURAL CUES/DIFFERENCES**. Nonverbals, verbal fillers, use of silence and word choice are all informed by culture. Be aware that you may misinterpret and seek to understand.
8. **AVOID EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS**. Put down the phone. Move away from the computer. Ask for a less distracting location. Don't fidget.

It's hard not to do a little personal inventory when you read a list like this, right? So, how are your listening skills? What comes naturally? What's nearly impossible? What do you think needs strengthening?

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