
PRACTICES OF AN EFFECTIVE LISTENER

AN EFFECTIVE LISTENER:

1. Listens intently to understand and concentrates on what is being said.
2. Does not prepare to reply, contradict or refute while listening.
3. Thoroughly listens. The speaker's last sentence may give a new slant to what was said before.
4. Knows that meaning involves more than the dictionary definition of the words that are used. Non-verbal cues such as the tone of the voice, the facial expressions and the overall behavior of the speaker also contribute to meaning.
5. Is careful not to interpret too quickly.
6. Looks for clues as to what the person is trying to say, sees the world through the speaker's eyes, and accepts the speaker's feelings as something worthy of consideration.
7. Puts aside personal views and opinions for the time being as the listener realizes that one cannot listen to one's inner self and at the same time listen outwardly to the speaker.
8. Practices patience. An effective listener does not jump ahead of the speaker but instead allows the speaker's story to be told completely. What the speaker will say next may not be what the listener expects to hear.
9. Understands listening is faster than talking. The average person speaks about 125 words per minute, but can listen to about 400 words per minute.
10. Shows interest and alertness.
11. Does not interrupt.
12. Asks questions to secure more information not to trap the speaker or force someone into a corner.
13. Is not a debater. An effective listener looks for areas of agreement, not for weak spots to attack with counter-arguments.
14. Listens to all participants in a conversation, not only to those who share the same viewpoint.
15. May paraphrase the speaker's words to confirm understanding. The listener clears up contested points before attempting to proceed with personal feelings and view.

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ⁱ This document pairs well with [Communication Roadblocks](#). For the University of Colorado Boulder Ombuds Office services and information, please call 303-492-5077.