



## **Purposeful Listening**

Listening sets the tone for relationships and emotional connection. It allows empathy and creates interpersonal bonds. Successful people don't master speaking but rather listening.

True listening is more than an auditory process. It takes in all senses especially those involving hearing and observation. As a communication process, it commands about 45% of an executive's time. Information is key to performance. Listening is the way that information is gathered. People speak at about 125-250 words per minute. Hearing is faster at about 350 to 500 words per minute but processing and analyzing what has been taken in is faster still at 800 to 3000 words per minute. While more than 35% of businesses think listening is a top skill for success, less than 2% of people have had formal education with listening.



Listening is an active, deliberate choice. It requires attention, energy and engagement. It begins by connecting with the sender. Communication is 55% nonverbal. This takes into account visuals

and observation. The next 38% is auditory. This accounts for tone and other sounds. Only 7% of listening involves words.

## Components of Listening

**Listening is a multifaceted, dynamic process with both active and passive aspects. It includes:**

- **Selecting**: choosing stimuli to pay attention to
- **Hearing**: auditory connections where sounds are transmitted and accurately received (as well as other sensory capture)
- **Understanding**: the phase through which preliminary perception and decoding occurs
- **Remembering**: organizing and storing information for processing and application
- **Interpreting**: discernment; attaching associations and meaning
- **Evaluating**: analyzing veracity and credibility of source, message and media; assessment and weighting
- **Responding**: feedback; impact; action; application

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Hearing begins by accurate capture of verbal, visual and auditory signals. It overcomes obstacles and barriers to gather data. Understanding and empathy occur as decoding and perception clarify information and assign meaning. Memory organizes this data and relates it to existing information. From this point, it is associated with other data and assigned specific relevance and meaning. After interpretation, the material is evaluated. This determines the value of media, assessment, weighting of detail and assignment of overall credibility. Finally, response allows for actionability of information. This final phase considers impact, application, and later use of the knowledge. Amazingly, all of this processing is done by a skilled listener as the conversation progresses.



**The most called-upon prerequisite of a friend is an accessible ear.**

**~Maya Angelou~**

**The golden rule of friendship is to listen to others as you would have them listen to you.**

**~David Augsburger~**

**Most of the successful people I've known are ones who do more listening than talking... You don't have to blow out the other fellow's light to let your own shine.**

**~Bernard M. Baruch~**

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The basic model for effective connection is **LISTEN**. It begins by deliberately paying attention to sensory input. Attending, focusing and concentrating on what someone else is presenting is a powerful tool. Listening develops relationships. People feel honored and appreciated when they are paid attention to. The quality listener is actively involved with the sender, message and situation. Intentionally, obstacles, barriers and distortions are overcome. Involvement is displayed through active feedback. Gestures, smiles and an assortment of nonverbal cues assure the sender that the message is carefully being heard. Repetition, reflection and paraphrasing assure accuracy. Interruptions are unwelcome but interjections and supportive comments encourage the sender.



# LISTEN

**L**ook! Actively attend to verbal & non-verbal cues

**I**nvolve yourself with the speaker & the topic

**S**ense what the speaker means by the statements

**T**hink! Associate (test); reason; analyze; apply

**E**ngage yourself; question; elaborate; elicit

**N**otice change. Be open to new information & ideas

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Sensing the message allows for both thought and feeling. Active listening involves both the head and the heart. Emotional management requires postponement of judgment. It is important to avoid triggers and distracting feelings that distort and take the mind off topic. Sensing focuses. It gives attention and takes in subtle shifts in the sender and message.

Thinking requires active emotional and intellectual involvement. It demands consideration, validation and an ear to what action is requested, required, and/or appropriate.

Engagement checks the content and credibility. It elicits more. Engagement sets the tone with excitement and energy. It encourages detail and actively encourages amplification and expansion of stories.

Finally, quality listening creatively notices change. It is intentionally connected with the sender. Listening will shift a relationship from merely casual to collegial, friendly and perhaps even more. Listening is always part of empathy, communication, relationships and connection.

## Purposeful Listening

Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. I may be given credit for having blazed the trail, but when I look at the subsequent developments I feel the credit is due to others rather than to myself.

~Alexander Graham Bell~



Listening is a core skill for intrapersonal, interpersonal and overall success. It is basic to emotional intelligence.