

Listening is an important communication skill. Competent communicators must be able to receive messages as well as send them.

- A. Frequently cited as the most frequent form of communication, listening is often ignored and seldom taught.
 - B. Listening is a complex, multi-stage process
 - A. Listening can be defined as the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken or nonverbal messages.
 - B. Effective listening consists of several, interrelated steps.
 - a. The first step in the listening process is attention, the act of selectively focusing on some stimuli while screening out others.
 - b. The next step is interpretation, the act of assigning meaning to the stimuli that capture attention.
 - c. The third step is evaluation, making decisions about the accuracy and usefulness of what we interpret.
 - d. The fourth step is responding, letting one's partner know one is listening.
 - C. Effective listening includes a relational component.
 - A. In addition to completing cognitive tasks such as comprehension and evaluation, listeners must fulfill relational tasks as well.
 - B. Through active listening, communicators indicate involvement, make the other comfortable, and show support.
 - D. New technologies have radically changed and extended the "message ecosystem" surrounding us as we send and listen to messages.
 - A. Today students and workers spend as much time listening to media as they do in interpersonal interaction.
 - B. Media messages offer challenges to effective listening.
 - a. They often occur in noisy environments, where we must divide our attention between physical surroundings and the messages we are listening to.
 - b. Because media messages are asynchronous, feedback and clarification can be difficult.
 - c. Media make it possible for others to bombard us with messages we don't want to hear.
- We listen in different ways and for different purposes.
 - There are six distinct types of listening, each of which fulfills a different purpose and calls for a different set of skills.
 - 1. In discriminatory listening, we listen simply to distinguish one stimulus from another. We succeed in this kind of listening by accurately recognizing and distinguishing message elements.
 - 2. In appreciative listening, we listen for pleasure. We succeed in this kind of listening if we enjoy and recognize the value of the listening experience.

- 3. In comprehensive listening, we listen to receive and remember new information. We succeed if we understand and can accurately re-create the intended meaning.
- 4. In evaluative listening, we listen to make judgments. Here success means making sound judgments about messages.
- 5. In empathic listening we listen to help others. Success occurs when others are better able to understand or cope with a problem.
- 6. Finally, in problem-focused listening, we listen to understand and diagnose problems in our relationships. We succeed at this form of listening when we come up with mutually satisfying solutions to problems.
- People differ in how they listen. Four different styles of listening have been identified.
 1. People-oriented listeners see listening as a way of building relationships.
 2. Content-oriented listeners like the challenge of listening to complex information.
 3. Action-oriented listeners usually listen for a specific reason and prefer concise, well-organized information that is related to their goals.
 4. Time-oriented listeners are concerned with keeping on schedule.
- Listening often means "reading between the lines."
 1. Effective listeners listen to the nonverbal cues that accompany words.
 2. Good listeners recognize that words have multiple meanings and listen for the intentions behind others' messages.
 3. It is important to listen for patterns in others' messages.
 4. It is essential to listen to one's own messages as well as those of others.
- Competent communicators are as aware of what is not said as they are of what is said.
 - Listening is important because it allows us to prevent and resolve conflict.
- A. Interpersonal conflicts are situations that occur whenever the goals or actions of two people are interdependent but incompatible.
- B. In the hands of skillful communicators, conflict can be healthy.
 - A. Conflict means interdependence.
 - B. Conflict signals a need for a change.
 - C. Conflict allows problem diagnosis.
- C. There are three pitfalls to effective conflict management: out-of-control emotions, faulty perceptions, and ineffective communication.
 - A. Uncontrolled emotions inhibit conflict resolution.
 - a. Humans are ruled by two connected but contradictory mental structures.
 - b. The "hot system" is triggered whenever we feel threat or danger. It results in emotional, simple, reflexive, and fast responses.
 - c. Taking breaks, spending time in reflection, asking "why?" questions, and using implementation plans can cool down hot emotions.

- B. Biased perceptions can also make conflicts worse.
 - a. People involved in conflicts often dramatically oversimplify the situation by making stereotypic judgments, blaming the other person, and ignoring information that contradicts preexisting beliefs.
 - b. Most people see conflicts as win-lose situations. This all-or-nothing attitude often leads them to reject others' proposals out of hand.
 - c. People assume, falsely, that they know what others are thinking and that others know what they are thinking and feeling.
 - d. When embroiled in conflict, people often see themselves as fairer, more responsible, and more deserving than their partners.
 - e. Finally, even when both parties get what they want, it is common for people to be dissatisfied if their opponents seem satisfied
- C. During conflict communication suffers. People may talk about the wrong things, or talk about things in the wrong ways, or even refuse to talk.
 - a. One of the biggest mistakes people make as they communicate during conflict is focusing on solutions before fully understanding the problem and arguing about positions instead of uncovering interests.
 - b. Typical communication mistakes are the use of gunny-sacking, kitchen-sinking, and stereotyping, as well as employing dysfunctional patterns like the demand/withdraw sequence.
 - c. Refusing to talk is a sure-fire way to increase conflict.
- D. Reframing conflicts in a cooperative way can help participants avoid some of these problems.
- D. Some people are better than others when it comes to resolving conflicts.
 - A. One's attitude toward human nature can affect one's response to conflict.
 - a. People who hold an entity theory, believing that human nature is fixed, often have difficulties managing conflict.
 - b. People who hold an incremental theory, believing that human qualities change with circumstances, are more successful in resolving conflict.
 - B. Emotional intelligence can also affect one's ability to deal with conflict.
 - a. Emotional intelligence is the ability to process emotional information.
 - b. Emotionally intelligent people can recognize the nonverbal cues that signal emotion, understand the effects of emotions on thinking and behavior, see how emotions are constructed and connected, and regulate their emotional reactions.
- Listening ability can be improved.
 - A. There are several ways to improve comprehension including learning to recognize main ideas, identify supporting details, see relationships among ideas, and recall basic ideas and details
 - B. To critically evaluate what a source is saying, listeners must be able to do a number of things.
 - A. They must attend with an open mind and perceive the speaker's purpose and organization of ideas

- B. They must also be able to discriminate between statements of fact and statements of opinion, distinguish between emotional and logical arguments, detect bias and prejudice, and recognize the speaker's attitude.
 - C. Finally, they must know how to synthesize and evaluate by drawing logical inferences and conclusions, recall implications and arguments, and recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and nonverbal messages
- C. There are ways to increase one's ability to listen empathically.
- A. Respecting the other's point of view is one way to become a more empathic listener.
 - B. Using paraphrasing allows one to check understanding before responding.
 - C. Expressing relational as well as content meaning is important during empathic listening.