

Be an Open-Minded Listener

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn additional methods for improving your listening skills. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Suspending Judgment
2. Active Listening
3. Tips for Being an Open-Minded Listener

1. Suspending Judgment

Someone who listens with an open mind is willing to be influenced by what he or she hears. It does not mean that the listener should not have strong views of his or her own, but it does require the listener to be willing to consider the merit of what other people say. This can be difficult when listening to something one does not want to hear or something about which one has pre-conceived notions.

All people have their own opinions on just about everything, so when people listen, they are tempted to immediately judge what someone else is saying from their own perspectives. However, this kind of pre-judging can lead to misunderstanding. People who listen with an open mind avoid anticipating what they think their conversational partners are going to say. They do not jump to conclusions, but rather hear the speaker out entirely and make an effort to understand his or her lines of argument.

Judgmental listening also occurs when the listener is only listening to the speaker in order to determine whether he or she is right or wrong, rather than listening to understand the speaker's ideas and where they come from. This kind of judgmental listening prevents the listener from fully engaging with the speaker on his or her own terms, and therefore limits the scope of the conversation.

Carrying pre-conceived notions about the speaker or the content of a speech into a conversation further limits effective listening. Listeners may have overwhelmingly positive or negative associations with particular people or ideas, and those associations can affect how listeners interpret. To listen effectively, one must work to temporarily suspend those associations in order to understand the speaker on his or her own terms.



TERM TO KNOW

Judgment

The evaluation of evidence in the making of a decision.

2. Exercising Empathy

Exercising **empathy** while listening to a speaker is related to suspending judgment in that it requires the listener to work to understand what the speaker says from his or her point of view. This does not mean that the listener must automatically agree with the speaker; rather, the listener should simply put him- or herself in the speaker's shoes and try to see the presented arguments from that perspective. One of the primary jobs of an effective listener is to get in touch with the speaker's perspective and not to color it with his or her own.

Empathetic listening helps promote effective listening because it allows the listener to take into account where the speaker is coming from, both emotionally and in terms of the content of his or her speech. This lets the listener assess what the speaker says and how it is presented more accurately, which ultimately leads to better understanding.



TERM TO KNOW

Empathy

The capacity to understand another person's point of view or the result of such understanding.

3. Tips for Being an Open-Minded Listener

To practice open-minded listening, take the following steps:

1. Leave ego at the door. Come to the presentation with a mind like a blank slate.
2. When disagreeing with the speaker, write down the objections rather than tuning out the presenter.
3. Be open to new ideas or new ways of thinking.
4. Look for opportunities to share common ground with the speaker, such as beliefs, ideologies, or experiences.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that listening with an open mind means you are receptive to being influenced by what you hear. **Suspend judgment** by becoming aware of pre-conceived notions, listen to the entire speech before jumping to conclusions, and listen to what the speaker has to say for understanding, not just to determine whether the speaker is right or wrong. Listening with **empathy** lets the listener better understand where the speaker is coming from, emotionally and conceptually. To **be an effective open-minded listener**, learn to leave ego at the door, and instead strive to find common ground with your speaker.

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Boundless Communications Boundless, 2 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 28 Jun. 2017 from

<https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/learning-to->



TERMS TO KNOW

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