

# Personal Listening Profile®

## Individual Report



**Training**  
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(individuals, teams &  
organizations)

### Respondent Name

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## Overview

### Personal Listening Profile®

Research shows that people listen with a natural or preferred style. The purpose of the *Personal Listening Profile*® is to help you identify your preferred listening style and to develop an appreciation for other approaches that may be more effective in different situations. With this knowledge, you will be able to develop more effective communication strategies for a variety of environments.

The *Personal Listening Profile* identifies five approaches to listening. These approaches are important because they reflect the focus of our listening. These approaches are:

APPROACH	FOCUS
<b>Appreciative</b>	to relax and enjoy the listening experience
<b>Empathic</b>	to support and understand the emotions of the speaker
<b>Discerning</b>	to gather complete and accurate information
<b>Comprehensive</b>	to organize information and understand the meaning of the message
<b>Evaluative</b>	to critique information and make a decision

We all use a variety of different approaches depending on the situation, but research suggests that each of us tend to use some approaches more than others. That is, we have a natural **Listening Style** that is comprised of one or more different **Listening Approaches**. The listening style that we use determines both the quality of the information that we gather and the reaction of others to our behavior. And although our listening style is the one that comes most easily to us, experience tells us that we can adapt our current listening approach to the needs of almost any situation with appropriate insight and motivation.

- [Page 3](#) includes a narrative description of your most natural **Listening Style**, which will give you a picture of your natural approaches to listening.
- [Page 4](#) contains a **Listening Approaches Graph** which indicates how inclined you are to use each of the five listening approaches.
- [Page 5](#) describes your potential strengths and possible growth areas.
- [Page 6](#) discusses your expectations of others as listeners.
- [Pages 7 - 8](#) include your **Communication Gap Analysis**, an overview of how your strengths or limitations in each of the listening approaches relates to the intended message of the speaker.
- [Pages 9 -11](#) contain a personalized **Action Plan** which will help you determine positive next steps for developing strategies that work.
- [Pages 12 – 16](#) include a detailed overview of each of the five listening approaches.



## ANALYTICAL ORIENTATION

Respondent, your two most natural listening approaches are **Comprehensive** and **Evaluative**. Your comprehensive approach indicates that you focus on finding the underlying meaning within a message and organizing the ideas that are presented to you. Your evaluative approach indicates that you also focus on assessing the accuracy of that information and using it to make a decision. People with these two styles have an analytical approach to listening. That is, they often see the primary purpose of listening as understanding and evaluating information.

You may be inclined to immediately organize and make sense out of the information. Most likely, you listen for “the big picture.” You may seek to identify main ideas, and you probably understand what people mean even if they are not explicit. That is, you may look for “the message behind the message.” You probably want to understand the core relationships among ideas so that you can dive into those ideas and draw even deeper conclusions. You tend to think conceptually about the information you are receiving, and you can easily elaborate on the main ideas.

You are likely to immediately search for the facts that support a main message, and you want to understand the rationale used to develop an argument. You may tend to compare incoming information with your own knowledge and experience to determine if the information rings true. The hidden motives of the speaker are most likely important to you, and you may be skeptical of those who are excessively enthusiastic about a topic. Further, you probably don’t accept a statement simply because an expert made it, and you may be inclined to search for alternative explanations for any argument. You may frequently “argue” with a speaker in your head, and others may regard your listening style as cynical at times. Others may notice that you readily ask questions to clarify the speaker’s message and subtly (or not-so-subtly) express doubts when you disagree with that message.

On many occasions, your listening style may be described as purposeful. The ultimate goal of your listening is often to plan, direct, organize, or control. In other words, you may frequently listen so that you can make an informed and accurate decision. Further, because it is important to you that your conclusions are accurate and well anchored in fact, you may quit listening or disengage from a conversation if you disagree with the message.

Although this profile will focus on your two most natural listening approaches, it is worth noting that the **Discerning** listening approach also appears to be highly natural for you. This indicates that as a listener your focus is often on gathering complete and accurate information. You may frequently take notes on what a speaker says so that you will not forget it. Most likely, you want to know what the main message is, and you focus closely on any presentation or conversation. In addition to the message, you probably remember the speaker’s appearance, behavior, and voice on most occasions.





## Working with Your Listening Style

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### Your Strengths as a Listener:

As mentioned earlier, one major strength of your listening style is your instinct to analyze the information in a deep and critical fashion. As a consequence, you probably take away more from a conversation than the simple facts and details communicated. Most likely, you are able to identify the unspoken, deeper message that gives meaning to the surface message. With this deeper understanding usually comes the ability to elaborate on the ideas presented and recognize their implications. This type of elaborate processing is routinely associated with better, long-lasting memory.

Further, your listening style also suggests that you are inclined to evaluate critically the quality of the information as it is presented to you. Most likely, you do not accept a message on face value, but rather want to understand the underlying rationale used to support that message. As a consequence, this style may lead you to conclusions and decisions that are realistic and well thought out. You are also likely to identify flaws or weak arguments that others miss. This, of course, often saves valuable time, energy, and resources that might otherwise be squandered.

### Your Growth Areas as a Listener:

Your previous responses indicate that Appreciative is one of your least natural approaches to listening. This approach to listening reflects a person's inclination to find enjoyment or humor in a conversation. And although almost everyone likes to be entertained, some regard it as more important in an interaction than others. Because you may not feel that this is as necessary in conversation as some others, miscommunications may arise. Others may feel that you disapprove of taking a break to relax or may feel that you are too task-oriented at times. Those who are highly inclined to entertain during an interaction may feel slighted or ignored in their efforts. That is, they may feel that their humor or stories have gone unaccepted or unvalued and, on occasion, may misinterpret your behavior as distant or disengaged.



## Working with Your Listening Style

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### Your Expectations of Others as Communicators:

Because our listening styles reflect our unspoken values and motivations, we often assume that others will have listening styles that are similar to our own. When others do not share our style, the chances of a miscommunication significantly increase. Even more important, we frequently misinterpret the real meaning of this miscommunication.

Given your listening style, you may assume that others are as focused on the big picture as you are. Consequently, your speaking and listening may gravitate toward the abstract or conceptual. If you expect others to be equally comprehensive in their listening styles, you may speak in a manner that some consider too theoretical or vague. They may be searching for concrete details while you are concerned with communicating the underlying ideas that give those details meaning. In addition, because you are a highly evaluative listener, you may expect others to be as critical in their thoughts as you, and you may be frustrated that others are persuaded by emotional appeals that have little rational backing. You also may assume that speakers understand that when you are evaluating their ideas, you are not evaluating them as people. At times, however, this assumption may be incorrect, and your evaluative approach to listening may cause some speakers to feel judged or threatened.

### Your Listening Style in Different Situations:

Experts estimate that people filter out or change the intended meaning of what they hear in 70 percent of communications. The biggest contributing factor to miscommunication is using a listening approach that is not appropriate for either the environment or for the message being communicated. Effective listeners consider not only their own intentions, but also the intentions of the speaker. Below are four common goals that motivate us to converse with another person:

**Persuading:** to convince the listener about an idea or course of action

**Informing:** to convey information and ideas

**Self-Expressing:** to share personal feelings, values, and experiences

**Pleasing:** to entertain, comfort, or bring enjoyment to another person

Because of your listening style, you tend to choose listening approaches that interact well with many of these communication goals. And like everyone, your natural inclinations may, at times, lead you to choose less-than-optimal listening approaches. The Communication Gap Analysis grid on the next page highlights some of the situations in which you may be a particularly good communicator and some situations in which you may benefit from improvement.



# Your Communication Gap Analysis

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The Communication Gap Analysis grid below displays the interaction between different listening approaches and different message goals. The feedback in each box is based on the degree to which each listening approach is natural for you.

- The unshaded boxes highlight some of your greatest strengths as a listener
- The lightly shaded boxes indicate strengths or growth areas of moderate importance
- The heavily shaded boxes draw attention to some potentially important growth areas for you as a listener

		GOAL OF THE MESSAGE				
		Task-Oriented		Relationship-Oriented		
		PERSUADING	INFORMING	SELF-EXPRESSING	PLEASEING	
<b>LISTENING APPROACH</b>	<b>Feeling-Oriented</b>	<b>APPRECIATIVE</b> Focus: enjoying the listening experience	This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.	On occasion, some might feel that you disregard the light-hearted interaction included with the factual message.	On occasion, speakers may feel that the spirit of their expression is not appreciated.	Some speakers may feel that you are unwilling to join them in their attempts to entertain or please.
	<b>EMPATHIC</b> Focus: supporting and understanding the feelings of the speaker	Speakers probably sense that you are at least attentive to the passion that drives their arguments.	This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations	Speakers probably sense that their feelings and concerns are valued and acknowledged.	Most likely, speakers recognize that you understand and accept their point of view as they attempt to entertain or please.	
	<b>DISCERNING</b> Focus: gathering complete information	You probably collect the relevant facts necessary to make an informed decision.	Most likely, you are able to gather thorough and accurate information with complete records of the interaction.	Speakers probably know that they have your full attention and sense that you are engaged in the conversation.	This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.	
	<b>COMPREHENSIVE</b> Focus: understanding the meaning of information	Most likely, you are able to identify and organize the important, core issues of the argument.	You are probably skilled at relating information to existing knowledge and processing the underlying meaning of the message.	You may be highly skilled at identifying the deeper, fundamental concerns that drive the expression.	This approach is probably not relevant for you in these situations.	
	<b>EVALUATIVE</b> Focus: critique information and make a decision	You are probably able to critically process the arguments made by a speaker and reach well-thought out conclusions.	Most likely, you scrutinize the accuracy of the information presented and identify erroneous reasoning.	At times, others might feel threatened or judged by a strong evaluative approach when expressing themselves.	Speakers may feel that their efforts to please are being received too critically if an approach is used that is too evaluative.	
	<b>Information-Oriented</b>					



# Your Communication Gap Analysis

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## Communication Gap Analysis Summary:

According to the Communication Gap Analysis on the previous page, areas where you appear to have the **greatest strengths** are:

- In situations where speakers are attempting to persuade you, you are probably able to critically process the arguments made and reach well-thought out conclusions.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to inform you, you are probably skilled at relating information to existing knowledge and processing the underlying meaning of the message.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to inform you, you are most likely able to gather thorough and accurate information with complete records of the interaction.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to persuade you, you are most likely able to identify and organize the important, core issues of their arguments.

Areas where you might face some of your **greatest challenges** are:

- In situations where speakers are attempting to express themselves to you, they might at times feel threatened or judged if a non-empathic, evaluative listening approach is used.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to entertain or please you, some speakers may feel that you have ignored or dismissed their efforts.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to entertain or please you, they may feel that their efforts are being received too critically if an evaluative approach is used without an appreciative approach.
- In situations where speakers are attempting to inform you, some might on occasion feel that you disregard the lighthearted interaction sent along with the factual message.

Based on the information above and throughout this report:

1. What listening approaches can you adopt or improve to better gather, understand, or act on information?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What listening approaches can you adopt or improve to strengthen relationships?







## Your Action Plan

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### Next Steps:

 As mentioned earlier, your results suggest that Appreciative is one of your least natural listening approaches. Some factors that might keep somebody from using this approach when appropriate include a tendency to critique information too quickly, an inability to relax, or an overly task-oriented approach to listening. Those who readily use this approach tend to accept entertaining messages in an uncritical fashion and usually focus on finding humor and enjoyment within any interaction. This is, of course, a personal preference. You may, however, find that it is helpful to understand the expectations of others in this area, particularly in situations where the speaker is attempting to entertain or please you or your group.

- You may want to remind yourself that others may have a higher need for such diversions.
- When you are surrounded by those with a highly appreciative style of interaction, you may want to be sure that they are not misinterpreting your behavior as disapproval.
- Appreciative listening can be improved by attending to the general tone of the conversation and actively remembering that listening does not always need to be purposeful.

 Based on the feedback you have received so far, what specific steps can you take to improve your listening and communication skills?





# Action Planning Grid

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In the first column below, list significant people in your life with whom you would like to improve communication. Below each name, list that person's most natural listening approach(es). If you don't know a person's natural listening approach(es), use the descriptions on the following pages to estimate which approach(es) best fit this person. Fill in the boxes in each row to identify potential communication problems and solutions.

<b>Your Most Natural Listening Approaches:</b>  <i>Comprehensive</i> <i>Evaluative</i> <i>Discerning</i>	<b>Areas where you might misinterpret the behavior of this person:</b>	<b>Areas where this person might misinterpret your behavior:</b>	<b>Specific actions that can help minimize or avoid miscommunication:</b>
Person:  Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person:  Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person:  Natural Listening Approaches:			
Person:  Natural Listening Approaches:			



# Appreciative Approach

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## Description:

People with a preference to appreciate while listening want to enjoy the listening experience. Since these listeners like to be entertained, they are more likely to pay attention to others if they enjoy their presentation.

Appreciative Listeners listen for inspiration and prefer listening to speakers who make them feel good about themselves, which helps them relax. Appreciative Listeners are also more likely to listen if the speaker is enjoying his or her performance. Appreciative Listeners care more about the overall impression of the speaker than the details being presented.

## Appropriate Environment:

- Enjoyment of a concert, conversation, or pleasurable event

## Focus

- To relax and enjoy the experience

## Motivation

- To connect to the speaker on a casual, friendly level
- To be entertained
- To be inspired
- To enjoy
- To find humor in the situation

## Behavioral Indicators

- Responds visibly to color, sound, language, and rhythm
- Smiles, laughs, and finds the humor in the message
- Matches the sender's enthusiasm or playfulness
- Relaxes
- Demonstrates an open, laidback posture
- Shows no signs of rushing the conversation
- Encourages the sender to elaborate on stories



 **Description:**

People with a preference to empathize while listening want to provide the speaker with a sounding board to offer support and reflection. Since Empathic Listeners are patient listeners, they tend to listen to the feelings and emotions that are revealed. They find it easy to relate to a speaker's feelings and may recognize what a speaker wants even before the speaker sees it clearly.

Empathic Listeners reflect what they hear others saying and let others know that they care about what has been said. As a result, Empathic Listeners are often approached by people who want to "let off steam." If asked for advice, however, the Empathic Listener will encourage others to decide for themselves.

**Appropriate Environment:**

- Counseling a friend, providing an opportunity for someone to "let off steam" or express their feelings

**Focus**

- To support the sender as he or she talks through concerns

**Motivation**

- To provide an opportunity for someone to express or vent thoughts and feelings
- To accept the message without judging
- To learn from other people's experiences

**Behavioral Indicators**

- Lets the sender know they care
- Lets the sender do the talking
- Shows interest
- Asks open-ended questions
- Remains relatively silent, not offering solutions immediately
- Reflects back the emotions that are being communicated (e.g., "That sounds frustrating.")
- Leans forward and maintains an open posture
- Nods
- Mirrors the emotions being spoken (e.g., looks concerned when the speaker is anxious)



 **Description:**

People with a preference to discern while listening want to make sure they get all the information. They frequently take notes on what a speaker says so that they will not forget it. Discerning Listeners want to know what the main message is, and they focus closely on any presentation or conversation.

In addition to the message, Discerning Listeners usually remember the speaker's appearance, behavior, and voice. Discerning Listeners find distractions very annoying and will do their best to eliminate them. They will likely tune out if there are too many distractions at any time while listening.

**Appropriate Environment:**

- Learning, gathering information

**Focus**

- To get complete information

**Motivation**

- To sort out the details
- To make sure nothing is missed
- To collect information in order to have it available later

**Behavioral Indicators**

- Takes notes
- Asks for clarification
- Concentrates
- Eliminates distractions
- Repeats to confirm accuracy
- Asks for details



**Description:**

People with a preference to comprehend while listening relate what they hear to what they already know by organizing and summarizing. They are good at recognizing key points and links between one message and another, even when a speaker is disorganized.

Comprehensive Listeners listen for how a speaker develops the arguments, so that they understand the rationale of the argument. They may ask questions to clarify a speaker's intention and relate what they hear to their own experience in order to better understand the message. Comprehensive Listeners can generally figure out what people intend to say, even if the speaker is not explicit. They can also recognize when someone is saying one thing and meaning something else. Comprehensive Listeners can tell when an individual does not understand what has been said, and they will be able to re-explain it more clearly.

**Appropriate Environment:**

- Taking direction from someone, determining what to do

**Focus**

- To organize and make sense of information

**Motivation**

- To relate the message to personal experience
- To understand the relationships among the ideas
- To determine the rationale of the speaker's argument
- To listen for the main idea and supporting ideas

**Behavioral Indicators**

- Elaborates on what has been said
- Asks for clarification of the sender's intended message
- Brings up related issues or metaphors
- Summarizes
- Explains the message to others in their own words
- Tries to capture the heart of the message and repeats it back to the sender



 **Description:**

People with a preference to evaluate while listening tend to look for the facts that support a speaker's comments. They do not accept something as true just because an expert says it. Evaluative Listeners listen for how a speaker develops the arguments in order to critique the message.

Evaluative Listeners try to figure out the speaker's intention before responding to the message and may mentally "argue" with the speaker. They will listen until they know what the speaker is saying, and then they will reply. If Evaluative Listeners do not like what a speaker is saying, they quit listening. Evaluative Listeners also tend to be skeptical of a speaker who is overly enthused about something. They think about how they would present the speaker's message differently.

**Appropriate Environment:**

- Making a decision, voting, drawing conclusions

**Focus**

- To make a decision based on the information provided

**Motivation**

- To relate what is heard to their personal beliefs
- To question the sender's motives
- To identify problems and find solutions
- To support the message with facts
- To accept or reject the message

**Behavioral Indicators**

- Actively agrees or disagrees
- Talks through the logic of the message
- Offers alternative ways of looking at a situation
- Expresses skepticism
- Gives the sender advice
- Looks for facts to support what the sender is saying
- Quits listening