

# ***Improving Your Listening Skills***

*This Sample Participant Workbook contains selected portions of an Individualized Participant Workbook. An Individualized Participant Workbook is generated from EPIC after the respondent completes the questions of the corresponding learning model.*

**Prepared exclusively for:**

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## Introduction to the Importance of Listening

### Goal

- Discover how good listening skills are essential to effective communication.

*Listening is our primary means of taking in information, and how we listen has an enormous impact on whether communication is effective or not.*

Notes:

# Speaking and Listening

I played the role of

Person A

Person B

How did it feel to be the listener?

How did it feel to be the speaker?

Notes:

## Personal Listening Experiences

A time when someone listened to me and it was a very meaningful or powerful experience:

A time when I needed someone to listen to me, but he or she did not:

Notes:

## Importance of Listening

Why improving listening skills is so important.

*What the experts have to say\*:*

- 85 percent of what we know, we learn from listening. (Shorpe)
- 45 percent of our time is spent listening, yet it is the most underdeveloped skill of most people. (Robinson)
- The average person can recall about 50 percent of what was just heard, but only 20 percent of it is remembered long term. (Robinson; Shorpe)
- More than 35 business studies rank listening as the number-one skill sought for entry-level positions and promotional considerations; with experience and GPA ranking 12 and 16 respectively. (AICPA; Goby & Lewis)

*\*As cited on the International Listening Association website, [www.listen.org](http://www.listen.org).*

Notes:

## Communication Ratio

### Effective Communicators' Goal:

Listen **80 percent** of the time and  
speak **20 percent** of the time.



Notes:



## Understanding Your Natural Listening Approach

### Goal

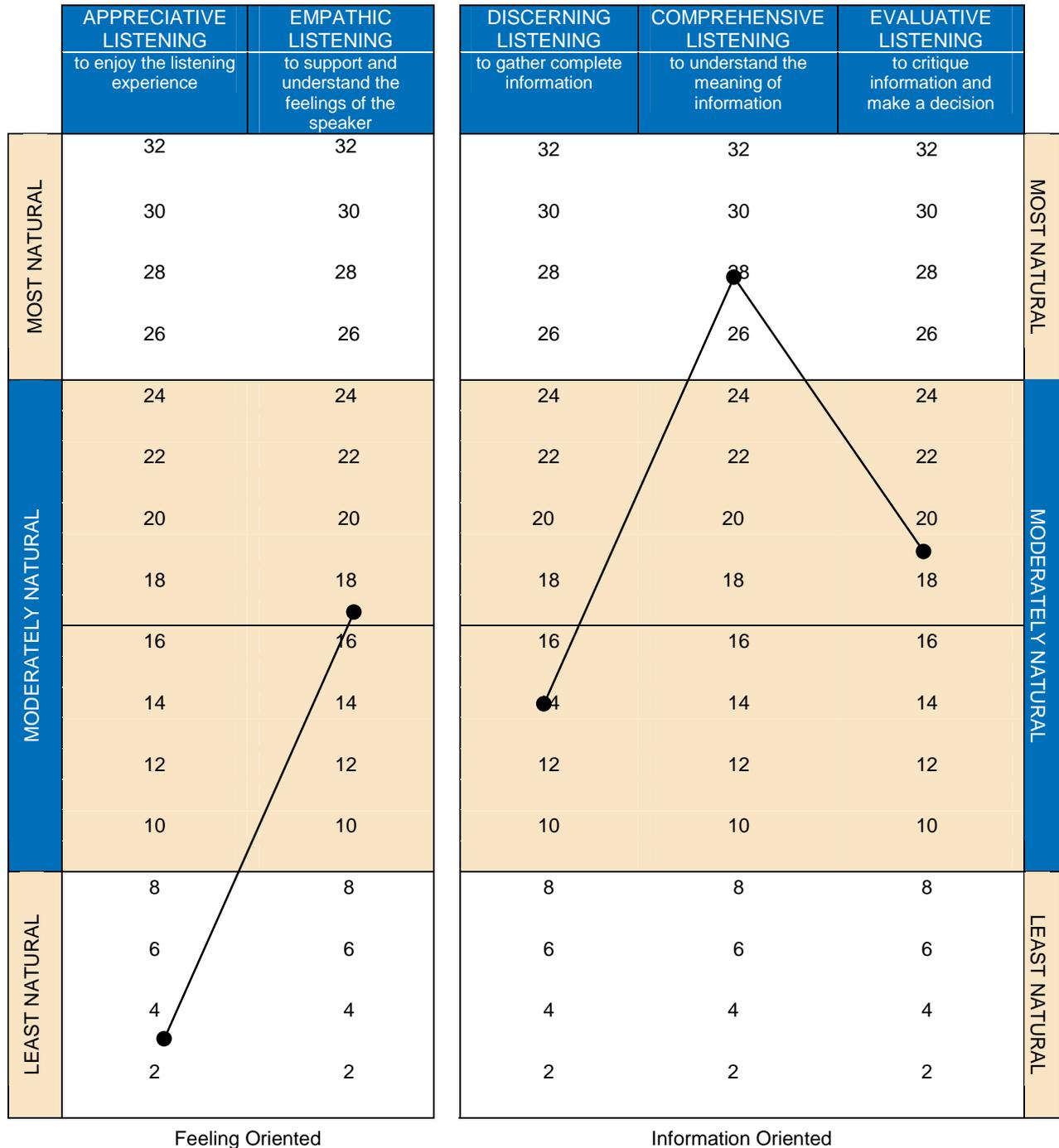
- Discover your most natural Listening Approaches.

*As we communicate with others, we may find that we are more effective listeners in some situations than in others. This is often related to how we most naturally approach the task of listening.*

Notes:

## Listening Approach Graph

The Listening Approaches Graph shows your scores on all five Listening Approaches. The height of your score indicates how naturally you listen using that particular approach. Those approaches that are most natural for you are those that you use automatically and without much conscious effort. Approaches that are least natural for you are those that you are likely able to use, but require more deliberate effort on your part.



## Your Listening Style

Each of the Listening Approaches has different characteristics. In addition, our patterns of listening tendencies tell us something about our strengths and growth areas as communicators.

Read your individualized feedback and underline statements that describe you well.

Payton, your most natural listening approach is **Comprehensive**. Furthermore, your responses suggest that this single approach is significantly more natural to you than any other approach. This indicates that as a listener your primary focus is on finding the underlying meaning within a message and organizing the ideas that are presented to you.

People with your listening approach naturally work to organize and make sense of the information that is presented to them. You are usually most attentive to “the big picture.” You may naturally seek to develop a framework within which you can organize details and less important ideas. You often listen most intensely at the beginning of an interaction. Once you comprehend a key idea, you are likely to relax, process the information, and expand even further upon it.

Ultimately, you probably want to make sense of the information and understand the underlying message, even if it is not stated directly. 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.

Comprehensive listening involves a mental process that is very active. Not only do you need to attend to incoming information, but also to information that is stored in long-term memory. As someone with this listening approach, you may seek to relate a new message to information, experiences, and observations from your past. You also may find yourself summarizing a message and putting it in your own words. You probably can often see information from several different angles. In addition, you may easily recognize when a person says one thing and means another. Further, you can frequently tell when someone doesn’t understand what has been said, and you may even be able to re-explain the message more clearly than the original speaker.



## Exploring Your Strengths and Challenges as a Listener

### Goals

- Explore how your listening strengths contribute to your success in communication.
- Explore how the listening skills that challenge you impede your success in communication.

*Our Listening Approaches provide important information on our listening strengths and challenges. Identifying these areas is a key step in improving communication.*

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## Listening Strengths

All of the Listening Approaches have unique strengths. By recognizing and building upon these strengths, you can improve the effectiveness of your communication with others.

Read your individualized feedback and underline statements that describe you well. Put a star by the top three listening strengths that you bring to the table.

As mentioned earlier, one of the major strengths of your listening style is your instinct to understand the core of the information being communicated. As a consequence, you pick up on more than just the details and facts that are 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.

Because of your listening style, you probably listen with the purpose of developing a framework within which to understand and organize the ideas presented. Consequently, you are able to integrate future information into this framework and understand it more thoroughly. In addition, because you are probably inclined to relate new material to your own experience, you may be adept at recognizing practical applications for that information.

How do these listening strengths help me communicate better?

## Listening Challenges

Just as no person is perfect, no style of listening is flawless. Acknowledging your listening challenges is vital to improving your communication with others.

Read your individualized feedback and underline statements that describe you well. Checkmark the top three listening challenges you've experienced.

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.

How do these challenges hold me back from communicating effectively, and what could I do differently?

## Improving on Challenges

Write down ideas you find helpful for improving your listening in areas that challenge you.



## Recognizing the Behaviors that Communicate Each Listening Approach

### Goals

- Recognize the specific behaviors associated with the five Listening Approaches.
- Explore your skill and comfort level with these behaviors.

*Each Listening Approach is characterized by certain behaviors. Learning these behaviors can help us become more effective at taking on the various approaches, which in turn can improve overall communication in every interaction.*

Notes:

## Appreciative Listening Behaviors

Behaviors from the video that show Appreciative Listening:

### Behavioral Indicators

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

Make a list of how you would demonstrate the Appreciate Listening Approach.

Write down two behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on your ability to use this approach.

Behavior #1

Behavior #2

## Empathic Listening Behaviors

Behaviors from the video that show Empathic Listening:

### Behavioral Indicators

- Lets the speaker know they care
- Lets the speaker do the talking
- Shows interest
- Asks open-ended questions
- Remains relatively silent, not offering solutions immediately
- Reflects back the emotions
- Leans forward with open posture
- Nods, mirrors emotions

Make a list of how you would demonstrate the Empathic Listening Approach.

Write down two behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on your ability to use this approach.

Behavior #1

Behavior #2

## Discerning Listening Behaviors

Behaviors from the video that show Discerning Listening:

### Behavioral Indicators

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

Make a list of how you would demonstrate the Discerning Listening Approach.

Write down two behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on your ability to use this approach.

Behavior #1

Behavior #2

## Comprehensive Listening Behaviors

Behaviors from the video that show Comprehensive Listening:

### Behavioral Indicators

- Elaborates on what has been communicated
- Asks for clarification of the intended message and ideas
- Brings up related issues and metaphors
- Summarizes
- Explains the message to others in their own words
- Paraphrases

Make a list of how you would demonstrate the Comprehensive Listening Approach.

Write down two behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on your ability to use this approach.

Behavior #1

Behavior #2

## Evaluative Listening Behaviors

Behaviors from the video that show Evaluative Listening:

### Behavioral Indicators

- Actively agrees or disagrees
- Talks through the logic
- Expresses skepticism
- Gives advice
- Asks for facts to support what is being said
- Quits listening when opinion is formed

Make a list of how you would demonstrate the Evaluative Listening Approach.

Write down two behaviors where improvement would make the greatest positive impact on your ability to use this approach.

Behavior #1

Behavior #2