

Condensed
Sample Version



Improving Your Listening Skills



Prepared exclusively for:

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Friday, April 13, 2007

This Participant Workbook provided by:

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Session Goal and Process

When we're listened to

- Our feelings and needs are taken into account.
- We're more relaxed and open.
- We feel we can achieve our objectives.

Our goal is to build your listening skills to help you get these kinds of results when you communicate with others.



The **Personal Listening Learning Model** will inform each step of today's process. We will

- **Explore** the role that listening plays in communication.
- **Learn** about the five approaches to listening.
- **Discover** our own listening approaches, including our strengths and challenges.
- **Practice** recognizing and using effective approaches for different listening situations.
- **Create** action plans to help apply our new listening skills.

My personal goals for this session:



Introduction to the Five Listening Approaches

MODULE GOALS:

- Discover the five different Listening Approaches used in communication.
- Recognize what focus and purpose characterize each Listening Approach.

Listening Focus and Mode

Complete the table with the names of the Approaches you learn from the video.

		Listening Mode		
		RECEIVING	UNDERSTANDING	JUDGING
Listening Focus	INFORMATION			
	FEELING			

Discerning Approach

Characteristics:

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 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.



Focus		Mode		
<input type="checkbox"/> Feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiving	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Judging

Notes on Discerning Listening characteristics:

Think about a situation when you used this Listening Approach or saw it being used.

How was the Discerning Listening Approach modeled?

Evaluative Approach

Characteristics:

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 argument 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 enthusiastic about something. They think about how they would present the speaker's message differently.



Focus		Mode		
<input type="checkbox"/> Feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiving	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Judging

Notes on Evaluative Listening characteristics:

Think about a situation when you used this Listening Approach or saw it being used.

How was the Evaluative Listening Approach modeled?

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 the information below about your listening style. Personalize your feedback by putting a ✓ next to things that are like you, an X next to items that are not like you, and a ? next to things you aren't sure about.



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.



Understanding Communication Gaps

MODULE GOALS:

- Discover how your preferred approach to listening can lead to gaps in communication.
- Recognize which speaker motivations give you the most difficulty.
- Explore ways to minimize miscommunication.

Communication Gap Analysis

Read the information below about how you tend to listen when communicating with different types of speakers. Personalize your feedback by putting a ✓ next to things that are like you, an X next to items that are not like you, and a ? next to things you aren't sure about.



Your Approach to Speakers Whose Motivation is to Persuade

People with a motivation to persuade want to influence your opinions or actions in some way. Therefore, your moderately high preference for Evaluative Listening may be a strength because you usually keep the discussion grounded in logic. You tend to analyze information and seek the facts. These people may be surprised if you do not join in their conviction or passion. However, your approach will ensure that faulty reasoning doesn't lead you astray, and it may help others realize that facts are often as important as intuition.

Your Approach to Speakers Whose Motivation is to Inform

Those with a motivation to inform want to pass along details, facts, and ideas. Therefore, your high preference for Comprehensive Listening can be a strength, but your low preference for Discerning Listening can be a challenge. This is because you may focus on the big-picture implications of the message but ignore key specifics. People who want to inform you may be frustrated when you don't remember the details. In such cases, it may be helpful to hold off on your strong tendency to draw implications long enough to capture the concrete information presented.

Your Approach to Speakers Whose Motivation is to Self-Express

People with a motivation to self-express want to share their feelings or reveal their thoughts. Therefore, your moderately high preference for Empathic Listening may be a strength because you are unlikely to lose patience or be cold to people who want to vent or speak their mind. You may not always share others' belief that the emotion beneath the message is most important. This could be beneficial, however, because you may bring a nice blend of empathy and logic into emotional situations.

Your Approach to Speakers Whose Motivation is to Entertain

Individuals with a motivation to entertain want to build relationships through humor or enthusiasm. Therefore, your low preference for Appreciative Listening may be a challenge because you usually view enjoyment as a less-relevant element in a message. You probably focus more on what people are saying than on humor or enthusiasm. This preference may fluster these people, and they may feel slighted if you do not respond well to their lighthearted energy. It may be helpful to remember that the spirit of the message is sometimes more important than its content.



Practicing the Listening Behaviors

MODULE GOALS:

- Practice your skills in each Listening Approach.
- Identify techniques for improving your effectiveness with each Listening Approach.

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Use the behavioral descriptions below to guide you during your practice.

<p>Appreciative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responds visibly to language and rhythm ▪ Smiles, laughs, finds the humor in the message ▪ Matches the speaker's enthusiasm/playfulness ▪ Relaxes with an open, laidback posture 	<p>To Enjoy</p>
<p>Discerning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Takes notes ▪ Asks for clarification of details ▪ Concentrates, eliminates distractions ▪ Repeats to confirm accuracy 	<p>To Learn</p>
<p>Evaluative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively agrees or disagrees ▪ Expresses skepticism ▪ Gives advice ▪ Asks for facts or logic to support what is said ▪ Quits listening when opinion is formed 	<p>To Evaluate</p>
<p>Empathic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows interest ▪ Lets the speaker know they care ▪ Allows the speaker to do the talking ▪ Asks open-ended questions ▪ Reflects back the emotions, nods ▪ Leans forward with open posture 	<p>To Support</p>
<p>Comprehensive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elaborates on what has been communicated ▪ Asks for clarification of the message and ideas ▪ Brings up related issues and metaphors ▪ Summarizes ▪ Explains messages to others in their own words ▪ Paraphrases 	<p>To Learn</p>

Which Listening Approach seemed easiest for the listener? Why?

Which approach seemed most difficult? Why?

Was one approach obviously more appropriate than another?

Speakers, how well did you recognize the approaches being used?

How did they make you feel as you were speaking?



Dinner with anyone...

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Action Plan: Improving Your Listening Skills

MODULE GOAL:

- Create action plans that will help you develop the skills to become more effective listeners.

Suggested Next Steps

Read your individualized feedback about what may challenge you most with your least natural approaches and ways to begin improving in those areas. Personalize your feedback by putting a ✓ next to things that are like you, an X next to items that are not like you, and a ? next to things you aren't sure about. In addition, write down any other helpful information that you have learned through today's activities.



As mentioned earlier, your results suggest that Discerning is one of your least natural listening approaches. There are a number of factors that interfere with a person's ability to listen with a discerning ear, such as daydreaming, tuning out too soon, diverting attention to distractions, elaborating on the message too early, or focusing on the speaker rather than the message.

- Spend some time observing yourself as a listener. What really keeps you from gathering thorough and accurate information in a conversation?
- Pay attention to when and how you tend to be most easily distracted and see if you can generate strategies to eliminate these distractions or temptations.
- Consider what memory aids might help you attend better to details (such as note taking, visual cues, or name associations). Brainstorm on ways to integrate these aids into your daily listening that would be most natural and helpful.

Your results also 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?



Conclusion to Improving Your Listening Skills

MODULE GOAL:

- Review what was learned about improving your listening skills.

Review

Program Goal:

Develop better listening skills so that we may gain greater results when communicating.

Influences to Listening Effectiveness

Internal filters:

- Selective attention
- Selective interpretation
- Selective retention

External factors:

- non-verbal communication
- speaker motivation

Personal Listening Learning Model

Defines five unique listening approaches, each appropriate for different situations:

- Appreciative Listening
- Empathic Listening
- Discerning Listening
- Comprehensive Listening
- Evaluative Listening

Our tendencies toward each approach determine our listening strengths and challenges.

Aligning Motivations

Both speakers and listeners have a purpose when involved in communication. Each listening approach aligns with one of the listener motivations and is most appropriate for use with a specific speaker motivation.

Listener motivation		Listening Approach		Speaker motivation
Enjoy	→	Appreciative	→	Entertain
Support	→	Empathic	→	Self-express
Understand	→	Discerning or Comprehensive	→	Inform
Evaluate	→	Evaluative	→	Persuade

For the best communication results, listeners should align their approaches to the motivation of the speaker.

The Challenge: Adapting the listening approach for successful communication

- Recognize when other approaches are needed.
- Stretch ourselves to adapt to these needs.