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Listening

When he talks to you it is like no one else is in the room.

— Said about former US President Bill Clinton



Aims

- How to improve your listening skills with active listening
- How to build good relationships in conversation
- Use F.A.C.E. when speaking to people
- How to build good relationships when writing

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Active listening – the key to networking

Quiz

In business and social conversations what kind of listener are you?

In business and social conversations, what are you like? Tick the descriptions that match your style.

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|----|--|--|
| 1 | It is difficult for me to start a conversation with people I don't know. | |
| 2 | I like meeting new people. I go up to them and say hello. | |
| 3 | I prefer to spend time with people I know and like. | |
| 4 | I don't talk to people I don't know until someone introduces me. | |
| 5 | I often speak too much when I meet people. | |
| 6 | I interrupt people when they are talking to say what I want. | |
| 7 | I get impatient if I have to listen for too long. | |
| 8 | I judge what people say and if I don't like it I interrupt. | |
| 9 | I am happy to listen and not talk. | |
| 10 | I listen a lot. I don't interrupt and I pause before I reply. | |

Now read the Briefing about the different types of listener that have been identified by research.



Briefing

The secret of successful networking and communication at work and in social situations is to be a good listener. Good talkers are first of all good listeners. Research has identified four types of listener:

- Non-listeners
- Marginal listeners
- Pretend listeners
- Active listeners

Non-listeners

Non-listeners are more interested in what they have to say themselves than in the person they are talking to. This means they monopolize the conversation and they talk all the time. They have a lot to say and they say it.

Marginal listeners

Marginal listeners are also more interested in what they have to say themselves than the person they are talking to. However, they use what the other person says as an introduction to what they want to say. They often interrupt so they can tell you what they are thinking. Marginal listeners often get impatient. They may show this by their eye movements, by tapping their fingers on the table or on their knee or by moving their feet a lot. They constantly check their mobile phones for text messages, emails and phone messages.

Pretend listeners

Pretend listeners appear to listen but they are observing your character and judging what you say. As they listen, they are deciding how to respond. Pretend listeners are concerned with what you say and how you say it. They are not concerned with how you feel. They 'hear the words' but they don't 'hear the feelings'.

Active listeners

Active listeners are quiet and sympathetic. They listen to what you say but they also pay attention to how you feel. You may be nervous or angry, or very happy and pleased. They encourage you to express what you want to say and to continue speaking. They don't interrupt. They wait for you to finish before they respond.

In reality we are probably all four types of listener at different times, depending on the conversation and how we feel! However, the more we can practise active listening the more people will want to listen to us. That is why people say the best listeners are often the best talkers.

Listening

- 1 Listen to four conversations and decide what the listener's style is.

Conversation	Style of listener
1 Paula	
2 Steve	
3 Kate	
4 Mr Klein	



2

Listen again to the four conversations and answer these questions.

- 1 In Conversation 1 what does Paula say to show sympathy?
- 2 In Conversation 1 what does Paula say to show surprise?
- 3 In Conversation 2 how does Maria sound?
- 4 In Conversation 3 what does Kate say about Tom's good news?
- 5 In Conversation 4 what does Mr Klein do to interrupt the conversation?

Business practice



1

Listen and repeat these sentences. Remember that to show genuine interest in what the other person is saying, the way you say something can be as important as the words you use. Try to copy the intonation as closely as possible.

Show interest	How are things? How's it going? Sounds interesting! How interesting! Really?
Show surprise	Really? Wow! No!
Show sympathy	Oh, dear! I'm sorry to hear that. Really! What a pity!
Show support	I'm sure we can fix this. I'm certain we can work this out. No problem. We'll deal with it. If you need any help, let me know.
Reassure	Don't worry about it. It'll be OK. Don't worry. Everything will be fine.
Praise or congratulate	Great! Well done! That's fantastic! Congratulations!



2

Take part in this conversation and be an active listener. Listen to Nicky, a colleague, and respond, following the instructions. Then listen to the model conversation.

Nicky: Hi there.

You: *Say hello. Ask about the project's progress.*

Nicky: Not very well, I'm afraid.

You: *Show sympathy.*

Nicky: Yes, we're over budget and late.

You: *Show surprise.*

Nicky: Yes, I'm a bit surprised too.

You: *Show support.*

Nicky: That would be great. Could I check my diary and fix a time for a meeting?

You: *Reassure.*



3

Take part in a conversation with another colleague, Sam, and respond, following the instructions. Then listen to the model conversation.

Sam: Hello.

You: *Say hello. Ask how things are.*

Sam: I wanted to ring and tell you. I got the promotion!

You: *Show surprise.*

Sam: Yes. I start next month.

You: *Congratulate Sam.*

Sam: Thanks. It's going to be hard work.

You: *Offer support.*

Sam: Thanks, I'll remember that.

Business culture

When you are with someone and listening to them, you normally look at them. However, in many countries to look at someone straight in the eye can be interpreted as threatening, challenging or to a senior person even insubordinate. Look at the questionnaire on page 104 and tick the descriptions that match your style.