

🎧 Listening exercise 1

- Exercise explained in 2nd workshop
- Prepare for 3rd workshop

Objective of the exercise

- Link Listening theory to real-life situations
- Increase awareness of listening skills
- Understand personal listening style
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in listening
- Identify actions to increase effectiveness

Skill Sheets

👉 Introduction D, D1, D5, D8

Exercise

You can do this on an individual basis in the period between the two Skill Training workshops. Below you find a list with five points of attention for effective listening. During the period between the two workshops, you take this list with you and use the form to capture your experiences. It is important for each time you fill this form out that you take notice of the 'lessons learned', and that you look for ways to increase your effectiveness in listening in the next lecture you attend.

After having attended a lecture, take 10 minutes to go through the five points of attention. Ask yourself how you got on in each area? Did you find it difficult, was it easy to do? And why was it difficult or easy? When answering these questions your main focus should be on the things that you can influence yourself. However, be aware of those things that you cannot influence yourself, but that do have a large impact on your effectiveness in listening. How are you going to manage these things in the future to increase your effectiveness?

For example, you may find yourself easily distracted when a professor speaks at a very slow pace. Once you have noticed this, you can think of ways to manage this in future lectures. Are you going to use the time that you are given by his slow pace to take notes? When you take notes, you force yourself to continue to listen, and you occupy your mind with the subject the professor is lecturing about.

Another example can be a professor who speaks at a very rapid pace, where you find it challenging to keep up with the content that he is taking you through. Once you have noticed this, you can decide to prepare more precisely for the lecture. You summarize the information from the books that you had to prepare for the lecture, maybe you can find a hand-out of his presentation up front, and you list the items that are most important for you to learn more about during the lecture. This way, you are very focused on a few items, and can allow for some relaxation in between the different items the professor is discussing.

Five points of attention for effective listening

■ Maintain eye contact with the instructor

During the lecture you may want to take notes, which will break the eye contact, but as a rule of thumb keep eye contact with your instructor or with your notes, not with anything else in the lecture room.

■ Maintain focus on the content, not on the delivery

Review for yourself how much attention you paid to what was said, and how much attention you paid to how it was said? Did you count the number of times the lecturer said 'eh', or were you inspired by his clothes? If yes, your focus was distracted from the 'what' to the 'how'.

■ Avoid emotional involvement

Listen to what is actually being said without immediately forming your own views on what is said. Do not question whether you believe it is true or not, nor if you agree or disagree. During the lecture you should try to remain objective and open-minded, after the lecture you can discuss and reflect on what you were told.

A good listener tries to understand thoroughly what the other person is saying. In the end he may disagree sharply, but before he disagrees he wants to know exactly what it is he is disagreeing with—Kenneth A. Wells

■ Stay active by asking questions

Active listening means you are continuously aware of what you are being lectured. By asking yourself mental questions, you can increase your focus and awareness. Questions you can ask yourself during the lecture are: “what is the key point of this lecture?”, “how does this relate to previous lectures?”

■ Use the gap between the rate of speech and your rate of thought

A person can think faster than a person can talk. This is partly the explanation why minds keep tending to wander off. You can use this gap by anticipating what is going to be said. Many lectures are built on literature that you were to prepare before the lecture. Try to link what is said to what you have read. Your mind will use its capacity to process what you have read and what you are hearing. Together with the above listed items, this will help you to stay focused on the subject of the lecture.

(adapted from www.d.umn.edu/student/loon/acad/strat/ss_listening.html)