

Listening Habits

Poor Listening Habits	Good Listening Habits
1. Calling a subject boring. Poor listeners will tune out if they decide the subject is boring.	A good listener listens closely for information that is important or useful.
2. Criticizing the speaker. A poor listener finds fault with the speaker (what they look like, wear, etc.) or says that the speaker can't have anything worthwhile to say.	A good listener realizes that looks are not important and will listen for ideas rather than seeking things to criticize.
3. Overreacting. Poor listeners disagree so strongly with the speaker that they miss the rest of the talk.	A good listener listens with the mind, not the emotions, and simply jots down a disagreement to ask about later.
4. Listening for facts only. Poor listeners don't think about the "big picture" or main ideas that go along with the facts.	A good listener wants to see how the facts explain the ideas and the evidence supports arguments, and realizes facts are important only in relation to principles, ideas, and arguments.
5. Faking attention. Poor listeners lock eyes onto the speaker and then relax and daydream.	A good listener realizes each talk is a chance to get facts and ideas that the speaker took hours to prepare.
6. Giving into distractions. Poor listeners will use distractions (footsteps, coughs, door closing) as an excuse to stop listening.	A good listener shuts out distractions and concentrates on the speaker's message.
7. Choosing only the easy stuff. Poor listeners want to be entertained and don't want to take the trouble to figure out complex ideas.	A good listener is intellectually curious and wants to see how the speaker proves his or her points. A good listener is not afraid of new and/or complex ideas.
8. Wasting thought speed. Poor listeners (because thought speed is faster than speech) will use thought speed to think about personal problems or distractions, thus falling behind the speaker.	Good listeners use thought speed and any pauses to figure out main ideas, summarizing the high points and looking forward to the rest of the talk.

Adapted from Walter Pauk, How To Study In College, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.