

LEARNING BY LISTENING

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I get it. You think I'm wasting time teaching you how to listen. As a teacher, what I have found over the years is that listening isn't as easy as you might think it is; especially when it comes to retaining an abundance of information. Sometimes we "overwrite", putting anything and everything that we hear on paper, but in doing that, we fail to listen and try to comprehend what is being said. You can learn a lot through listening. Unfortunately, most people don't "listen", they "hear". Listening is a skill which must be developed.

If you apply the following suggestions, you will find yourself listening more effectively, both in class and out.

1. **Determine why what the speaker is saying is important to you.** If you don't have an immediate, vivid reason for listening to a speaker, you are an unmotivated listener.
2. **Take responsibility for what is being said.** The responsibility for interest and understanding lies with you, not with the speaker. Learning is up to the learner. If you simply want to sit passively and blame the speaker for your lack of success, then you're not a serious learner.
3. **If you can't hear, arrange things so you can.** Move away from sources of noise-human or mechanical. Sit where you can see the speaker easily, and where other distractions are at a minimum.
4. **Listen to what the speaker is saying.** Don't tune the speaker out because you don't like something about him/her or the message. Be sure you understand something before you reject it.
5. **Look for the speaker's pattern of organization.** In a lecture, a speaker is generally referring to notes or some other source of information. You can understand much better if you are able to recognize what the speaker's driving at and how the speaker's getting there.
6. **Look for the main idea or ideas of the presentation.** Facts are important only as they support the speaker's points. If you have trouble distinguishing between the important and the trivial, a friend or a tutor in the Academic Skills Center can help you.
7. **Don't let your mind wander.** Your thoughts move far more rapidly than the swiftest mouth, and the urge to stray is tempting. Your attention span can be increased, however, through deliberate effort. Continue to practice the habit of attention and don't be discouraged by early failures.
8. **Take notes while you listen.** Even if you recognize everything being said, jot it down, because you won't remember it later unless you do.