

# The **WRITING** CENTER

**Elftmann Student  
Success Center**

## **A Guide On How To:**

## **Use Listening Skills**

- What is listening?
- Why is it important?
- How do I improve?
- Am I listening well?



# Listening Skills

The average college student spends 14 hours a week in class listening. Are your listening skills up to the task?

## What is listening?

While hearing is simply allowing noise to enter your ears, **listening involves an action** by the listener in response to that noise. Hearing is a passive activity, and approaching a lecture this way is dangerous because your brain won't be prepared to comprehend important information from a lecture. **Listening will help you be ready to take on new information.**

### Why Is Listening Important In Technical Fields?

As a <b>student</b> , you need to know and understand:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procedures and techniques</li><li>• Safety guidelines</li><li>• Legal standards and codes</li></ul>
As an <b>employee</b> , you need to implement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Announcements and memos</li><li>• Assignments and directions</li><li>• How to allow for most effective use of time</li></ul>
As a <b>producer</b> , you need to be able to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use and connect what you already know to new information</li><li>• Filter information into what is useful and what's not</li><li>• Store and recall information easily</li></ul>
As a <b>consultant</b> , you need to develop:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More productive relationships with customers and co-workers</li><li>• Ways to gain more information from your speaker</li><li>• Resolutions to or avoidance of miscommunications</li></ul>

## How can I improve my listening skills?

### Prepare

We absorb new information best when we have something familiar to connect it to. Find out **what topic will be covered before the lecture** starts, and think about what you already know.

### Eye Contact

Eye contact is a sign to the speaker that the listener is paying attention, so not only will your listening improve, but **the speaker will gain momentum**, too.

### Focus

**Set a purpose**, often pulled from the title of the day's topic, to listen for.

### Stay Neutral

**Stay open to new information** by shifting your attitude towards a more neutral stance, and you'll be better able to receive what's being taught.

### Avoid Distractions

This means that you, the learner, should **not give attention** to a classmate coming in late, a cell phone ringing, or anything else that might pull your attention away from the lecture.

### Active Listening

There's a gap between how fast you can think and how fast the instructor can talk. Use that gap to keep your mind busy by **taking notes** or **thinking of questions** to ask.

### Clues

**Transitions**, like "first," "secondly," or "most importantly," are helpful in following the structure of the lecture. **Facial expressions, gestures, and voice inflection** also help listeners do the same, as well as give clues as to important, shocking, or particularly note-worthy pieces of information.

## How do I know if I'm listening well?

	<b>Effective listening</b>	<b>Ineffective listening</b>
<b>Test scores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Topics covered on tests are recognized from lecture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Missing points because directions are not followed</li><li>• Topics on test are unrecognized</li></ul>
<b>Lecture or textbook notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Able to put the main points in your own words</li><li>• Can write a reaction to the topic</li><li>• Can find connections to other readings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not sure what to write down for notes</li><li>• No reaction to the topic</li></ul>
<b>Body movement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nodding and facial expressions</li><li>• Research has shown that when a listener simply leans forward toward the speaker, their interest in what the speaker says increases.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little or no body movement</li><li>• Research has shown that listeners retain 30% less information when sitting with their arms folded.</li></ul>

## References

- "Benefits of Teaching Listening." Learning Through Listening. Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, Incorporated, 2011. Web. 25 Feb 2011. <<http://www.learningthroughlistening.org/>>.
- "Suggestions for Active Listening." Elmhurst College Learning Center. Elmhurst College, n.d. Web. 25 Feb 2011. <[http://www.elmhurst.edu/library/learningcenter/Listening/effective\\_listening\\_skills](http://www.elmhurst.edu/library/learningcenter/Listening/effective_listening_skills)>.
- Wood, Patti. "The Body Language of Listening." Communications Dynamics, 2000-2011. Web. 25 Feb 2011. <<http://www.pattiwood.net/article.asp?PageID=2323>>.

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