



Academic Support Center

Effective Listening

Attentive listeners are usually good learners. Unfortunately, many students have poor listening skills, which can be very problematic because students spend considerable time in classrooms. Since there is a major difference between hearing and listening, many students believe they are good listeners. Attentive listeners process the information presented to them.

These tips will help you be a more attentive listener:

Listen for meaning

Attentive listeners not only pay attention to words, they also focus on the message these words are intended to transmit. To decipher messages, first determine the central idea being communicated. Then pay close attention to anecdotes, explanations, and other details meant to clarify meaning. While you work to improve listening skills, always pay close attention to the central focus of what is being relayed.

Adjust your note taking style to the lecture

Ineffective listeners often attempt to jot down every detail from a lecture. They are often under the impression that a detailed outline equates to good notes. Those who use this strategy often get discouraged when they review their notes only to get confused by the amount of information in their notes. On the other hand, effective listeners adapt their note-taking to the teaching styles of their teachers. They focus on central ideas and jot down details that expand on, or clarify, the central concepts of a lecture.

Tackle difficult to understand material

Many students tune out teachers when they discuss confusing topics. It is possible to hear every word during a lecture, but it can be very difficult processing confusing or complicated concepts. Good listeners harness their mental faculties to process what is being presented.

Concentrate and pay attention

People who struggle with listening often have a difficult time concentrating. Good listeners must work to develop the ability to concentrate and ignore distractions. This requires the ability to tune out personal worries, thoughts about family members and friends, and thoughts about upcoming activities. Those who can hone the ability to concentrate can improve listening skills.

Be prepared

If you do not complete required reading or review notes from previous lectures prior to class, it is very difficult to process information and attentively listen to lectures. This is why you should never neglect to complete reading or other class assignments.

Focus on what is important

One of the keys of effective listening is to concentrate on central ideas and main focuses. It is a mistake only to be concerned about facts during a lecture. In other words, effective listeners focus on the stories or ideas behind the facts.

Choose to be interested

Many people tune out lectures because they're bored or disinterested. As a result, they neglect to take notes on key concepts. Effective listeners become interested in the subject material, so they can process the information and pay attention to classroom lectures.