

Are You Listening?

Which characteristics do you see in yourself?
In others?

Ineffective Listening

Ineffective listening characteristics include:

- bringing up other topics in the middle of your thought
- never asking questions about what you are saying
- having a blank look on his or her face
- looking away from the speaker
- frowning
- scowling
- shaking a pointed finger
- yawning
- tapping a finger, foot or pencil
- turning your back on the speaker
- doodling
- clenching your hands tightly
- crossing your arms over your chest
- holding a rigid posture
- blinking a lot
- stepping back or moving away
- fidgeting
- staring at the speaker and not glancing away
- shouting
- checking the clock or watch often
- taking notes.

Effective Listening

- Stop talking.
- Appear interested. Be aware of your body language.
- Put down your cell phone.
- Show you want to listen by maintaining good eye contact and giving the other person your full attention.
- Remove distractions like the mail, TV or doodling.
- Empathize — try to see the other person's point of view.
- Validate the other person's experience by showing (with words, actions or both) that you understand his or her feelings and thoughts. For example, you could say "I realize this is hard for you" or "You sound upset."
- Be patient. Do not interrupt. Allow the speaker to finish.
- Ask questions, paraphrase (restate) for clarification such as, "By that do you mean..."
- Be open-minded and flexible. Be willing to accept ideas of other people.