

🕒 17 MIN READ

## How Good Are Your Listening Skills?

### Understanding Someone's Entire Message

For many of us, listening is the communication skill we use the most. Yet, many people listen poorly, and they rarely think to improve this important skill.

Poor listeners "hear" what's being said, but they rarely "listen" to the whole message.

They get distracted by their own thoughts or by what's going on around them, and they formulate their responses before the person who they're talking to has finished speaking. Because of this, they miss crucial information.

Good listeners, on the other hand, enjoy better relationships, because they fully understand what other people are saying. Their team members are also more productive, because they feel that they can discuss problems easily, and talk through solutions.

So, how good do you think your listening skills are? Test them below, and then find out how you can improve.

## How Good Are Your Listening Skills?

### Instructions

Evaluate each statement as you actually are, rather than as you think you should be. When you've finished, click "Calculate My Total" to add up your score, and use the table that follows to think about next steps.

14 Statements to Answer	Not at All	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1 To be more productive, I respond to emails and instant messages while I'm speaking to people on the phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2 I repeat points back during a conversation to clarify my understanding of what the other person is saying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>14 Statements to Answer</b>	<b>Not at All</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>
<b>3</b> When people speak to me about sensitive subjects, I make an effort to put them at ease.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>4</b> I feel uncomfortable with silence during conversations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>5</b> As I listen, I compare the other person's viewpoint with my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>6</b> To get people to elaborate on their point, I ask open questions (ones that can't be answered with "yes" or "no").	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>7</b> When someone is speaking to me, I nod and say things like "OK" and "uh-huh" occasionally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>8</b> I play "devil's advocate" to prompt responses from the other person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>9</b> I catch myself asking leading questions to encourage the other person to agree with my viewpoint.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>10</b> I interrupt people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>11</b> When people speak to me, I stay completely still so that I don't distract them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>12</b> I try to read the other person's body language as I listen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>13</b> If the other person is struggling to explain something, I jump in with my own suggestions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14 Statements to Answer	Not at All	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
14 If I'm busy, I let others talk to me as long as they're quick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Calculate My Total Total = 0**

### Score Interpretation

### Score Comment

14-29 You need to improve your listening skills. The people around you probably feel that you don't pay attention to them when they talk to you, and they may feel that you don't understand them.

You can boost your listening skills with some simple steps. (Read **below** to get started.)

30-49 Your listening skills are OK, but there's definitely room for improvement.

Use the tools that we suggest **below** to develop your listening skills. Pay special attention to the advice on **empathic listening** – this is great for taking your listening skills to the next level.

50-70 You have good listening skills. People feel that they are able to approach you if they need someone to listen to them, and they trust that you'll give them your full attention. They also know that you'll give them space to talk freely, without interrupting or talking too much about yourself.

But that doesn't mean you have to stop here. Read our guidance **below** to see if you can develop your skills even further. You could also help others to develop their listening skills through **coaching** or **mentoring** .

## Preparing to Listen

(Questions 1, 3, 14)

Good preparation is essential for effective listening. Without it, it's hard to listen to people successfully.

Before you have an important conversation, remove anything that may distract you, so that you can focus and give the other person your full attention. Switch off your cell phone, turn off instant messaging and email alerts, put your work away, close your meeting room door, and do what you can to make sure that you won't be interrupted.

If you know that you won't be able to offer the other person your full attention – for example, if you're working on an urgent task – schedule a better time to speak. However, make sure that the other person knows that the conversation is important to you.

Also, do what you can to make the other person feel at ease. Use open **body language**, and a friendly tone.

If he indicates that he wants to speak about a sensitive subject, and if this is appropriate, remind him that the conversation is in confidential, and that he can be honest with you. (If you're a manager, there may be some things, however, that you cannot keep confidential, harassment, for instance, or negligent behavior. If your conversation is beginning to encroach on these, make this clear to the other person.)

## Active Listening

(Questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

When you **listen actively**, you not only make a conscious effort to hear the other person's words, but, more importantly, you try to understand their whole message.

To do this, learn how to read people's **body language** and tone, so that you can identify "hidden" nonverbal messages.

Also, don't interrupt people, or allow yourself to become distracted by your own thoughts or opinions. Instead, focus completely on what the other person is saying. Nod or say "OK" occasionally to acknowledge that you're listening.

If you don't understand something, wait for the other person to finish what she's saying before you ask for clarification.

Above all, don't formulate a response until she has communicated her whole message, and avoid any judgment or criticism until it's your turn to speak. If you argue or "play devil's advocate" while you listen, you may discourage her from opening up to you.

**Tip:**

It can be difficult not to formulate a response while the other person is talking. This is because we typically think much faster than other people can speak, so our brains are often "whirring away" while they are talking. You'll need to concentrate hard to stay focused on the person who's speaking, and this can take a lot of effort.

**Empathic Listening**

(Questions 2, 4, 6, 13)

When you demonstrate **empathy**, you recognize other people's emotions, and you do what you can to understand their perspectives. As such, it can really help to take active listening to the next level.

To **listen empathically**, put yourself "in the other person's shoes," and try to see things from his point of view. Then, summarize what he says, in your own words, to show him that you understand his perspective.

Also, ask open **questions** to help him to articulate himself fully, and avoid using leading questions that "put words in his mouth." This gives him the opportunity to add further detail, and to talk about his feelings.

Importantly, don't fear moments of silence when you listen. Instead, embrace pauses as a way to give him time to finish his point, and to allow him to reflect on what he has said.

**Key Points**

When you have good listening skills, you not only "hear" what's being said, you listen to the whole message as well. Because of this, you enable others to express themselves fully.

When you need to listen, make sure that you're prepared, and that things in your environment will not distract you. Also, do what you can to put people at ease.

Next, use active listening techniques so that you give people your full attention, and look out for the nonverbal elements of their message.

Finally, take your listening skills to the next level with empathic listening. When appropriate, embrace silence and make an effort to see things from other people's perspectives.

**Note:**

This assessment has not been validated and is intended for illustrative purposes only. It is just one of many that help you evaluate your abilities in a wide range of important career skills. [Click here](#) for other self-tests.

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**LyneB** 2022-04-11 17:50:22



**brendansimp** 2022-04-08 13:06:30



This is a great tool to understand your listening skills. It would be useful if the results and guidance could be downloaded as a pdf.

**Learning4Me1** 2022-04-07 07:34:57



**xarovira** 2022-04-03 18:21:08



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**Non Member** 2022-03-31 23:01:16



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