



## THE ELEVEN TRAITS OF A GOOD LISTENER

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by Joe Bonura, CSP

A good listener looks at the speaker and makes **Eye Contact**.

A good listener does not finish the other person's sentences. There is nothing more irritating than trying to express an original thought when someone cuts in and assumes the rest of the statement.

A good listener uses **positive body language**. Keep your arms open, and not crossed, to indicate that you understand their ideas. Occasionally, nod your head or shrug your shoulders to get your body involved in the process of listening.

A good listener uses **positive verbal signals**. Say "u-huh" or "hmmm," or "I understand." As the speaker gives you information, these verbal signals, which give positive feedback, will reveal that you are in the conversation. Imagine the confusion if you telephoned someone, but they made no response when you answered the phone. You would continue to ask, "Are you there?"

A good listener uses **positive facial expressions**. Smile often, even when on the telephone; it shows up in your voice. Let concern show on your face when the speaker expresses a problem.

A good listener does not change the subject too quickly. Let the speaker express concerns and ideas fully before you move on to a new subject. Concentrate on finding out their needs; do not interject your own stories and experiences.

A good listener asks good questions to prompt further discussion and develops questions from the other person's responses. To do this effectively you must be attentive.

A good listener focuses on what the speaker is saying and not on his/her own next statement.

A good listener exhibits patience. Do not look at your watch or tap your fingers, or look over the shoulder of the speaker.

A good listener does the 80-20 rule. Simply stated, you speak 20 per cent of the time and listen 80 per cent of the time.

A good listener makes the speaker feel important. Imagine that the speaker wears a sign that reads, "Make me feel important."

Remember: The only time we learn is when our ears are open, and our mouths are closed.

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