

Bad Listening Habits

Here's a list of habits that interfere with effective listening. Do you do any of these things?

• Criticizing the Speaker

1. Do you think the topic will be uninteresting even before the person starts to talk?
2. Do you find fault with the way the person talks? Do you see mistakes in grammar or think the person talks too loudly or softly? Are you distracted if the person speaks into a microphone and "pops" their p's? Do you think the person's accent is difficult to understand?
3. Are you critical of the way the person is dressed? Instead of concentrating on the words, do you focus your attention on his or her apparel, jewelry, shoes, or accessories?

• Interrupting the Speaker

1. Do you know what the person is going to say before it is said?
2. Do you jump into the conversation and cut off the speaker?
3. Do you feel you must challenge what the person is saying? Instead of listening, do you build a mental argument and interrupt?

• Pretending to Listen

1. Do you stare at the person and nod at appropriate times but your mind is elsewhere?
2. Do you rehearse what you are going to say?
3. Do you fake attention and interject occasional "uh huhs" to make the person think you are listening?

• Reacting Emotionally

1. Do you let a word or phrase used by the speaker upset you and your anger begins to boil?
2. While you are mentally calling the speaker names, do you miss everything that is said?

• Creating Distractions

1. Do you not give the person your undivided attention? Do you try to do two things at once—listen and accomplish a task, such as sorting a pile of papers, looking up information, keying at the computer?
2. While the person is talking, do you swing your leg, play with your hair, tap your pencil on the desk, crack your knuckles, or display another annoying mannerism?

• Daydreaming

1. Do you think of other topics while the person is talking? (Most people talk at a rate of 120 to 150 words a minute; yet our brain can process words at 600 to 650 words a minute.)

BAD LISTENING HABITS

Ask students to think of one person they know who is not a good listener. Call on students at random and ask them to state one bad habit that person has. List these on the chalkboard. Students should not give the person's name.