



Listening and Critical Thinking

What will you learn?

When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe the listening process and identify the primary features that distinguish listening from hearing.
2. Discuss three reasons why listening is important in our lives.
3. Define and discuss examples of active, empathic, critical, and enjoyment listening.
4. Analyze barriers to effective listening, including internal and external noise, perceptions of others, and yourself.
5. Use strategies for critical thinking to evaluate both the communication situation and the message of the speaker.
6. Describe differences in listening behaviors between men and women.
7. Adapt general strategies for effective listening to specific situations including the workplace, the classroom, and mediated environments.
8. Engage in ethical listening behaviors.

*L*istening is our most frequently used and least studied communication skill. In this chapter you will learn about the listening process, some factors that can inhibit effective listening, different types of listening, and strategies for becoming a more effective listener. Our hope is that you will learn that listening, like any other communication behavior, is a skill that must be developed through forethought and practice.

Walk into any modern hospital, and you cannot help but be impressed by the wide array of medical technology, from electronic thermometers to large-scale imaging devices that can detect microscopic tumors. Such technology has undeniable benefits, but critics caution that these devices should not overwhelm the human side of medicine—the physician who *listens* to his or her patient’s feelings, fears, and concerns.

Class Discussion

What are some examples of professional situations (i.e., not interpersonal relationships) in which you felt another person was not listening effectively? Why do some people fail to be good listeners even though it may be part of their job?

Most medical schools are beginning to recognize the need to train medical professionals to be better listeners. They have created programs in which community members “play” patients in mock medical interviews. Student doctors and nurses are evaluated on their listening and other communication skills as they interact with these patients. After the sessions the patients give feedback on how well they think the students listened and reacted to their feelings.

The simulated interviews help the medical students understand the benefits of listening. They see how a dialogue between patient and practitioner can result in more insightful and quicker diagnoses, more effective treatment, and greater patient satisfaction. Perhaps most importantly, they learn that health and healing go far beyond technology.

Listening is one of the most important communication skills that we can acquire. Listening is the primary way that we understand others, enrich our own lives, and learn important, often vital, information. As the use of patient interviews in medical school shows, listening is a skill that must be developed through practice. In this chapter you will learn how to develop your own listening skills in your relationships with others, in the workplace, and in the classroom.

What Is Listening?

Have you ever had the embarrassing experience of having someone ask you a question during a conversation when you were only pretending to listen?

You have no idea what the question was, so you have no idea what the answer should be. Or have you ever had someone ask you to do something that was important to that person but unimportant to you—so you forgot to do it? The sounds may go into your ears, but that does not mean that your brain interprets them; nor does it mean that your mind stores the message or that your body does what the message requested. Sometimes you hear, you listen, and you even understand the message, but you do not obey. The listening process is complicated. Much happens between the reception of sounds and an overt response by the receiver.

The first step in learning about listening is to understand the distinction between hearing and listening. **Hearing** is simply the act of receiving sound. You can close your eyes to avoid seeing, pinch your nose to avoid smelling, and shrink away to avoid touch, but your ears have no flaps to cover them. Their structure suggests that for your own protection, your ears should never be closed, even when you sleep. Because you cannot close your ears, you receive and hear sounds constantly.

Discussion Question

What are situations where you might hear but not listen? Do you have to listen all the time to be an effective communicator?

hearing

The act of receiving sound.



International Listening Association

The International Listening Association (ILA) is the scholarly organization devoted to the study and teaching of listening behaviors. The ILA website has a wide variety of information about listening including quotations, bibliographies, and links to research articles. The web address for the ILA is www.listen.org.

However, hearing is not the same as listening. **Listening**, as defined by the ILA, is “the active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. It involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (1995, p. 1). As you can see, listening involves more than simply hearing. Notably, listening is an active process involving the construction and retention of and reaction to meanings we assign to information.

listening

The active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. It involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.

MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

A common myth is that listening is mostly a physical act. In fact, listening is much more of a mental act than a physical act. As you will learn in this chapter, listening requires you to actively think about and process information.

The process of listening is summarized in Figure 5.1. As the illustration shows, we receive stimuli (such as music, words, or sounds) in the ear, where the smallest bones in the body translate the vibrations into sensations registered by the brain.

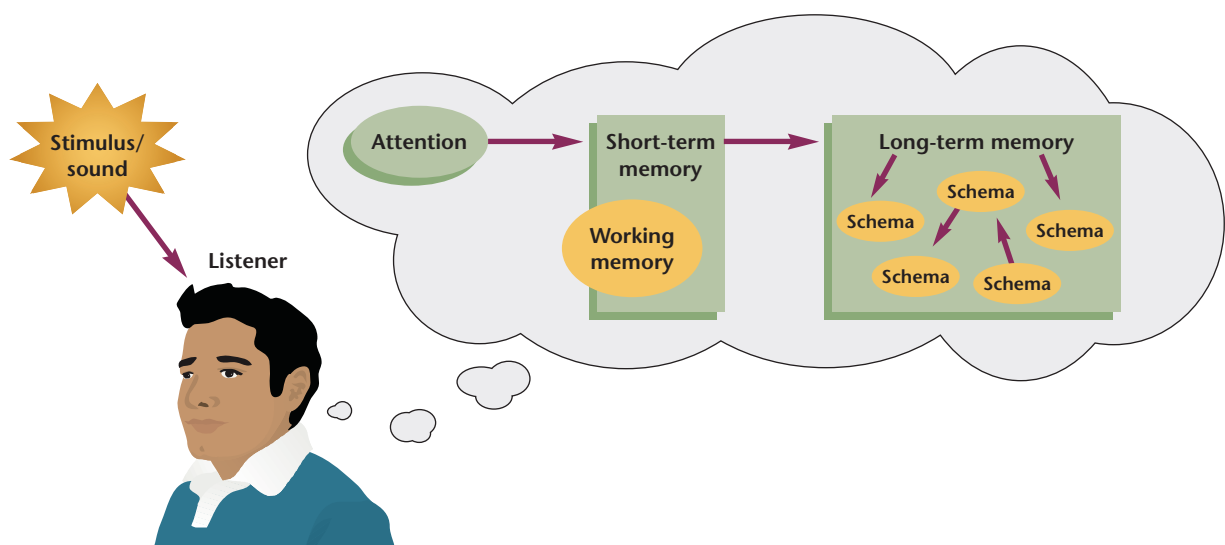


Figure 5.1 The listening process.

The brain, using what is referred to as attention and working memory, focuses on the sensations and gives them meaning. Your brain might, for example, recognize the first few bars of a favorite song, the voice of a favorite artist, or the sound of a police siren. Upon hearing these sounds, you immediately know what they mean. Your interpreted message is then stored in short-term memory for immediate use or in long-term memory for future recall (Janusik, 2005).

As we discuss later, people create many obstacles to effective listening. Not all obstacles, however, are the fault of lazy, unethical, or ineffective listeners. Because listening is a process, natural barriers present themselves at various stages. These natural barriers are explained for each major step in the listening process: attention, working memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory.

Group Activity

Have groups of students make a list of things that can capture our automatic attention in a classroom situation.

What strategies can we use to prevent these distractions from drawing our selective attention away from the teacher or learning task?

selective attention

The sustained focus we give to stimuli we deem important.

automatic attention

The instinctive focus we give to stimuli signaling a change in our surroundings, stimuli that we deem important, or stimuli that we perceive to signal danger.

working memory

The part of our consciousness that interprets and assigns meaning to stimuli we pay attention to.

Attention

After the ear receives sound waves, the brain sorts them by importance. Think of the last time you had a conversation in the mall or cafeteria. Your brain was being bombarded by aural stimuli, or sounds, but your mind was able to block out the other sounds and focus on your friend's voice. In most circumstances this process of blocking out irrelevant stimuli and focusing on important stimuli is volitional, or voluntary. That is, we want to selectively hear what our friend has to say rather than the fragmented chatter of the adolescents ahead of us. In other situations, our attention is automatic rather than selective. We automatically focus attention in the direction of a loud bang, a siren, or the cry of a baby.

Attention can be selective or automatic. **Selective attention** is the sustained focus we give to stimuli we deem important. We selectively pay attention to our favorite television show, to our friends during conversation, and to the professors in our classes. Selective attention can be impeded by our mind's instinct to pay automatic attention to certain stimuli. **Automatic attention** is the instinctive focus we give to stimuli signaling a change in our surroundings (like a person walking into the room), stimuli that we deem important (our name being shouted from across the room), or stimuli that we perceive to signal danger (like a siren or loud bang). The problem faced by all of us is that automatic attention competes with selective attention. When we are trying to selectively pay attention to one stimulus (like our professor's lecture), other stimuli naturally draw our automatic attention.

TRY ◀ THIS

In your next class, make a list of all stimuli in the communication environment that could draw your automatic attention. What strategies might you use to eliminate the potential for distraction?

Working Memory

Once we have paid selective attention to relevant sounds and stimuli, our brain must initially process and make sense of those stimuli. **Working memory** is the part of our consciousness that interprets and assigns meaning to stimuli we pay

attention to. Our working memory looks for shortcuts when processing information. Rather than trying to interpret each letter in a word, our working memory quickly recognizes the pattern of letters and assigns meaning. Likewise, when we hear the sounds of a word, our working memory recognizes the pattern of sounds rather than trying to process each sound separately. On a larger scale, our working memory can recognize patterns of words. For instance, if you watch the game show *Wheel of Fortune*, your working memory helps you look for patterns of words combined into phrases, even when all of the letters and words are not visible.

Because the recognition of patterns is an essential function of working memory, working memory must work in conjunction with long-term memory. Although we discuss long-term memory in detail later, understand that working memory looks for connections between newly heard information and information stored in long-term memory. If your mind finds connections, patterns are more easily distinguished and listening is more efficient.

Short-Term Memory

Once interpreted in working memory, information is sent to either short-term or long-term memory. **Short-term memory** is a temporary storage place for information. All of us use short-term memory to retain thoughts that we want to use immediately but do not necessarily want to keep for future reference. You might think of short-term memory as being similar to a Post-it note. You will use the information on the note for a quick reference but will soon discard it or decide to write it down in a more secure location.

We constantly use short-term memory, but it is the least efficient of our memory resources. Classic studies in the field of psychology have documented that short-term memory is limited in both the quantity of information stored and the length of time information is retained (Miller, 1994). In terms of quantity, short-term memory is limited to 7 ± 2 bits of information. A bit of information is any organized unit of information including sounds, letters, words, sentences, or something less concrete like ideas, depending on the ability of working memory to recognize patterns. If your short-term memory becomes overloaded (for average people more than 9 bits of information), you begin to forget. Short-term memory is also limited to about 20 seconds in duration unless some strategy like rehearsal is used. If you rehearse a phone number over and over until you reach your dorm room, you will likely remember it. However, if something breaks your concentration and you stop rehearsing, the number will likely be lost. Unfortunately, many listeners rely too much on short-term memory during the listening process. Researchers in the field of communication have found that individuals recall only 50% of a message immediately after listening to it and only 25% after a short delay (Gilbert, 1988).

Long-Term Memory

Information processed in working memory can also be stored in long-term memory for later recall. Similarly, information temporarily stored in short-term memory can be deemed important and subsequently stored in long-term memory. If short-term memory is the Post-it note in the listening process, long-term memory is the super-computer. **Long-term memory** is our permanent storage place for information

Teaching Tip

See activities in the instructor's manual on the *Online Learning Center* that deal with attention, working memory, and short-term memory. Several of the activities involve "experiments" that you can use during class to illustrate listening/recall barriers.

short-term memory

A temporary storage place for information.

Class Activity

Describe a scenario of going to eat ice cream on a summer evening. Then, ask students to try and recall specific instances from their childhood. As they remember certain events, discuss how this exercise illustrates how stimulus cues can trigger long-term recall.

long-term memory

Our permanent storage place for information including but not limited to past experiences; language; values; knowledge; images of people; memories of sights, sounds, and smells; and even fantasies.

including but not limited to past experiences; language; values; knowledge; images of people; memories of sights, sounds, and smells; and even fantasies. Unlike short-term memory, long-term memory has no known limitations in the quantity or duration of stored information.

Explanations of how long-term memory works are only speculative; however, researchers hypothesize that our thoughts are organized according to **schema**, which are organizational “filing systems” for thoughts held in long-term memory. We might think of schema as an interconnected web of information. Our ability to remember information in long-term memory is dependent on finding connections to the correct schema containing the particular memory, thought, idea, or image we are trying to recall.

In theory, people with normal functioning brains never lose information stored in long-term memory. How is it, then, that we often forget things we listen to? When we try to access information in long-term memory, we access schema holding needed information through the use of stimulus cues, which could be words, images, or even smells and tastes. If the cue we receive does not give us enough information to access the corresponding schema, we may be unable to recall the information. Consider, for example, a situation in which you see a person who looks familiar. In this case you recognize the person (a visual cue); however, that stimulus does not provide you with enough information to recall who it is. If you hear the person’s voice or if she or he mentions a previous encounter with you, you may then have enough information to activate the correct schema and recall specific details about her or him.

Long-term memory plays a key role in the listening process. As we receive sounds, our working memory looks for patterns based on schema contained in our long-term memory. Thus our ability to use language, to recognize concepts, and to interpret meaning is based on the schema we accumulate over a lifetime. If we encounter new information that does not relate to preexisting schema, our working memory instructs our long-term memory to create new schema to hold the information. The arrows in Figure 5.1 depict this working relationship between schema and working memory.

schema

Organizational “filing systems” for thoughts held in long-term memory.

Class Activity

Watch a show like *Friends* or *Frasier*. Ask students to identify examples of positive and negative feedback. How did such feedback influence communication in the show?

The Importance of Listening in Our Lives

Given our basic understanding of listening, it is clearly an essential skill for effective communicators. A classic study of listening showed that Americans spend more than 40% of their time listening (Rankin, 1926). Weinrauch and Swanda

(1975) found that business personnel, including those with and without managerial responsibilities, spend nearly 33% of their time listening, almost 26% of their time speaking, nearly 23% of their time writing, and almost 19% of their time reading. When Werner (1975) investigated the communication activities of high school and college students, homemakers, and employees in a variety of other occupations, she determined that they spend 55% of their time listening, 13% reading, and 8% writing. Figure 5.2 shows how much time college students spend in various communication activities each day. According to these studies, you spend over half your time (53%) listening either to the mass media or to other people.

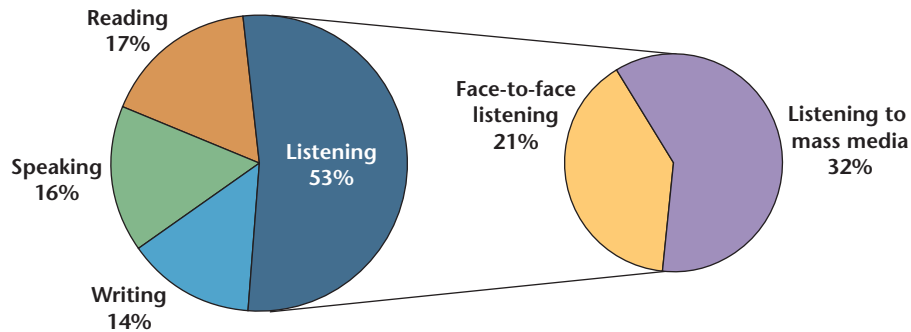


Figure 5.2 Proportions of time spent by college students in communication activities.

TRY ◀ THIS

For one week, keep a communication journal tracking what type of communication activities you engage in during your lunch break (such as talking, reading, listening face-to-face, and listening to the media). At the conclusion of the week, calculate what percentage of your time was devoted to each behavior. How do your results differ from those reported in Figure 5.2?

The importance of listening is even clearer when we consider how we use it in our personal and professional lives. Listening helps us build and maintain relationships and can even help us determine whether the person we are talking to is being deceitful (di Batista, 1997). Listening is also recognized as an essential skill for business success (Haigh, 2006). Because of effective listening, we are able to improve workplace relationships and be more productive (Nichols, 2006). Listening is even linked to successful communication within highly technical fields like medicine, in which improved listening skills on the part of doctors are associated with fewer malpractice claims from patients (Lenckus, 2005).

Video Activity

Ask students to view the video segment “Opposites Attract” on the *Online Learning Center*. How does the interaction between Enrique and his fiancée illustrate the importance of listening in interpersonal communication?

Video Activity

Near the beginning of the movie *Office Space*, there are several interactions involving Ron Livingston’s character, Peter Gibbons, in which he is told to use a different cover page for his reports. The humorous clip (approximately 7–10 minutes) illustrates how we often let bureaucracy get in the way of effective workplace listening.

Listening is classified into four main types: active listening, empathic listening, critical listening, and listening for enjoyment. **Active listening** is “involved listening with a purpose” (Barker, 1971). Active listening involves the steps of (1) listening carefully by using all available senses, (2) paraphrasing what is heard both mentally and verbally, (3) checking your understanding to ensure accuracy, and (4) providing feedback. Feedback consists of the listener’s verbal and nonverbal responses to the speaker and the speaker’s message. Feedback can be positive, whereby the speaker’s message is confirmed, or negative, whereby the speaker’s message is disconfirmed. Valued in conversation, small-group discussion, and even question-and-answer sessions in public speaking, active listening is a communication skill worth learning.

Empathic listening is a form of active listening in which you attempt to understand the other person. You engage in empathic listening by using both mindfulness,

Four Types of Listening

active listening

Involved listening with a purpose.

empathic listening

Listening with a purpose and attempting to understand the other person.

critical listening

Listening that challenges the speaker's message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility.

listening for enjoyment

Situations involving relaxing, fun, or emotionally stimulating information.

Video Activity

Ask students to view the video segment "Senior Seminar" on the *Online Learning Center*. What types of feedback did the various characters in this segment use? Did some characters use positive feedback? Were there examples of negative feedback?



Listening for enjoyment is an easy way to relax.

which is being "fully engaged in the moment" (Wood, 2002), and empathy, which is the ability to perceive another person's worldview as if it were your own.

In **critical listening** you challenge the speaker's message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility. Critical listening and critical thinking really go hand in hand: You cannot listen critically if you do not think critically. Skills in critical listening are especially important because we are constantly bombarded with commercials, telemarketing calls, and other persuasive messages. Later in the chapter we discuss several strategies you can use to listen and think critically.

Finally, **listening for enjoyment** involves seeking out situations involving relaxing, fun, or emotionally stimulating information. Whether you are listening to your favorite musical group or television show, or your friend telling a story, you continue listening because you enjoy it. Besides helping you relax, studies show that listening to enjoyable music can even reduce pain for hospital patients (A dose of music may ease the pain, 2000).

Barriers to Listening

Writing Assignment

Students should prepare a short essay discussing strategies they could use to overcome each barrier to effective listening. Students should discuss their strategies in groups.

Listeners are sometimes distracted by noise and cannot listen to the speaker's message. Careful attention to the speaker allows listeners to avoid distractions.



Although you might agree that listening is important, you may not be properly prepared for effective listening. A survey conducted by a corporate training and development firm noted that 80% of corporate executives taking part in the survey rated listening as the most important skill in the workforce. Unfortunately, nearly 30% of those same executives said that listening was the

most lacking communication skill among their employees (Salopek, 1999). In the section explaining the connection between listening and thinking we discussed several natural impediments to listening. In this section we explain barriers we create for ourselves in the listening process. Table 5.1 identifies noise, perceptions of others, and yourself as potential listening barriers.

TABLE 5.1 BARRIERS TO LISTENING

TYPE OF BARRIER	EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE
NOISE	
Physical distractions	All the stimuli in the environment that keep you from focusing on the message. Example: loud music playing at a party
Mental distractions	The wandering of the mind when it is supposed to be focusing on something. Example: thinking about a lunch date while listening to a teacher
Factual distractions	Focusing so intently on the details that you miss the main point. Example: listening to all details of a conversation but forgetting the main idea
Semantic distractions	Overresponding to an emotion-laden word or concept. Example: not listening to a teacher when she mentions “Marxist theory”
PERCEPTION OF OTHERS	
Status	Devoting attention based on the social standing, rank, or perceived value of another. Example: not listening to a freshman in a group activity
Stereotypes	Treating individuals as if they are the same as others in a given category. Example: assuming all older people have similar opinions
Sights and sounds	Letting appearances or voice qualities affect your listening. Example: not listening to a person with a screechy voice
YOURSELF	
Egocentrism	Excessive self-focus, or seeing yourself as the central concern in every conversation. Example: redirecting conversations to your own problems
Defensiveness	Acting threatened and feeling like you must defend what you have said or done. Example: assuming others’ comments are veiled criticisms of you
Experiential superiority	Looking down on others as if their experience with life is not as good as yours. Example: not listening to those with less experience
Personal bias	Letting your own predispositions, or strongly held beliefs, interfere with your ability to interpret information correctly. Example: assuming that people are generally truthful (or deceitful)
Pseudolistening	Pretending to listen but letting your mind or attention wander to something else. Example: daydreaming while your professor is lecturing

Video Activity

Ask students to view the video segment “Sam’s Graduation Party” on the *Online Learning Center*. How did Dr. Stern’s status as Sam’s adviser affect the way people listened to her?

View the video “Senior Seminar” on the *Online Learning Center*, and analyze how various barriers to effective listening were present in the group interaction.

TRY ◀ THIS

What slights, slurs, or implications through words or gestures would cause you to stop listening and start distracting you from listening to another person? What are the “red flag” words that set you off and keep you from listening?

Gender Differences in Listening

Have you ever had a conversation with a person of the opposite sex and thought afterwards that they just did not listen well? If so, you are not alone. Debra Tannen, a linguistics professor and acclaimed author of the book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, suggests that men and women have very distinct communication styles that influence everything from how they use vocal inflections to how they listen. For example, Tannen (2001) suggests that men tend to be more instrumental or task-oriented when communicating whereas women tend to be more relationally oriented. Although there are many similarities between men and women, Table 5.2 lists some of the more commonly observed differences relevant to listening.

TRY ◀ THIS

The next time you interact with a stranger, make note of whether you generally think he or she is truthful or deceitful. What behaviors or impressions led you to that conclusion?

TABLE 5.2 LISTENING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

	WOMEN	MEN
PURPOSE FOR LISTENING	Listen to understand the other person's emotions and to find common interests	Listen in order to take action and solve problems
LISTENING PREFERENCES	Like complex information that requires careful evaluation	Like short, concise, unambiguous, and error-free communication
LISTENING AWARENESS	Are highly perceptive to how well the other person understands	Often fail to recognize when others do not understand
NONVERBAL LISTENING BEHAVIORS	Tend to be attentive and to have sustained eye contact with the other person	Tend to be less attentive and to use glances to monitor reactions; use eye contact to indicate liking
INTERRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS	Interrupt less often, with interruptions usually signaling agreement and support	Interrupt more often, with interruptions often used to switch topics

SOURCE: Tannen (2001); Watson, Lazarus, & Thomas (1999); and Weisfield & Stack (2002).

Teaching Tip

The results of research presented in this table represent conclusions about average men and women. Point out to students that much of what we know from social-scientific research is based on comparisons of group averages and should not be assumed to be true of all members of a particular group.

So far in this chapter, we have emphasized the importance of listening while at the same time pointing out both natural and self-taught barriers to effective listening. Faced with this knowledge, you might wonder how any of us can hope to become effective listeners. After all, the potential barriers are many. Fortunately, each of us can take several steps to overcome these barriers to good listening. In this section we highlight how you can become a better listener by listening critically and using verbal and nonverbal communication effectively.

How Can You Become a Better Listener?

Listen and Think Critically

Critical listening and critical thinking go hand in hand: You cannot listen critically without also thinking critically. We have already noted that critical listening is a form of active listening in which you carefully analyze the accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility of a speaker's message. Similarly, **critical thinking** involves analyzing the speaker, the situation, and the speaker's ideas to make critical judgments about the message being presented. Although we discuss critical thinking in terms of its relationship to critical listening, you also use critical thinking when reading, watching television, or analyzing the ingredients of a tasty meal.

One way to think critically is to analyze the communication situation, or the context in which communication is occurring. One of our students recently attended a job interview for a position requiring "excellent public-speaking skills." As a communication major she was excited about this job prospect. At the interview she found herself surrounded by nearly 50 other applicants. During a presentation she learned that the company sold "natural" products like filtered water, organic toothpaste, and even chemical-free moist wipes for babies. Through a little critical thinking and listening, she quickly figured out that the company was actually a type of pyramid scheme and the "interview" was an attempt to get her to purchase bulk quantities of the products and then "market" those products to her friends and family. The people explaining the products were indeed experts, but her analysis of the situation told her that this job was not the one for her.

The second strategy for engaging in critical listening and thinking is to carefully analyze the speaker's ideas. Table 5.3 lists the general skills you should develop to do this effectively. As you can see, the first skill is to identify supporting material. When analyzing the message, a good starting point is to determine whether the speaker is using evidence from other sources to support main points. Does the speaker identify the source(s)? Are the sources recognizable as qualified experts on the topic? Do the sources have any potential bias that would diminish their credibility? We view these questions as essential for effective critical listening, especially given the frequent use of Internet sources by speakers. Our experience is that not only are many Internet sources of poor quality but some even intentionally distort information.

Third, you need to determine whether speakers are describing things that they have seen themselves or presenting conclusions that they have drawn themselves, or are reporting the descriptions and conclusions of others. The distinctions between these concepts involve the differences between first-person and third-person

critical thinking

Analyzing the speaker, the situation, and the speaker's ideas to make critical judgments about the message being presented.

Homework Assignment

Have students collect controversial stories from local newspapers. Ask them to review several articles and write a brief assessment of procedures used by the reporter to ensure accuracy and truth. How can this same process be applied in critical listening situations?

TABLE 5.3 ANALYZING THE SPEAKER'S IDEAS

STRATEGY	EXPLANATION
Identify support	Evaluate the process by which the speaker discovered information or gained knowledge, as well as specific elements of the message content.
Evaluate arguments	Analyze the reasoning process underlying key points made in a speech or statement for use of emotional, logical, and personal proof.

observations and inferences. To recognize these differences you should do the following:

1. *Distinguish between observations and inferences.* Observations are descriptions based on phenomena that can be sensed—seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt. Inferences are generalizations from or about information you have received through your senses. You might observe that a number of people who are homeless live in your community. Based on that observation, you might infer that your community does not have enough affordable housing. Observations are more likely to be agreed upon by observers; inferences vary widely in terms of agreement between individuals (Brooks & Heath, 1989).
2. *Distinguish between first-person and second-person observations.* A **first-person observation** is based on something that was personally sensed; a **second-person observation** is a report of what another person observed. First-person observations are typically more accurate because they are direct accounts rather than inferences drawn from others' accounts.

A final skill in critical listening is to analyze the credibility of the speaker. **Source credibility** is the extent to which the speaker is perceived as competent to make the claims he or she is making. If you wanted to know what procedures were required to study in Europe for a semester, who would give you the best information? Would you be more likely to trust your roommate, who heard about foreign exchange programs during freshman orientation; your adviser, who had an exchange student a few years back; or the director of international programs on your campus? If your car ran poorly, would you trust your neighbor's advice or that of an auto mechanic? The choice seems obvious in these situations. When assessing the credibility of a speaker, you should determine whether the speaker has qualifications, whether the speaker has experience, and whether the speaker has any evident bias or ulterior motive for taking a certain position.

As you can see, critical listeners must evaluate several aspects of the communication situation, the speaker's message, and even the speaker's credibility. Critical thinking and listening are skills that each of us can develop with practice. The next time you hear a classmate present information, a teacher lecture on a concept, or a friend discuss options for evening entertainment, you have a perfect opportunity to practice critical thinking and listening. As with any skill, diligent practice now will allow those skills to become automatic in the future.

first-person observation

Observations based on something that you personally have sensed.

second-person observation

A report of what another person observed.

source credibility

The extent to which the speaker is perceived as competent to make the claims he or she is making.

◀ SKILL BUILDER ▶

As a college student you have multiple opportunities to practice effective listening skills. Select one of your classes in which the teacher lectures for at least part of the class period. During that time make note of the main points for the lecture as well as any supporting material used to bolster the main point (teachers tend to rely on examples as supporting material). Were there any main points that did not have supporting material? If you find such instances, ask your teacher to provide an example to illustrate what he or she is talking about.

Writing Assignment

Ask students to find an editorial from a newspaper. They should write a brief essay analyzing arguments made in the editorial. What type of proof was most predominant?

Use Verbal Communication Effectively

The notion of verbal components of listening may seem strange to you. You may reason that if you are engaged in listening, you cannot also be speaking. However, transactional communication assumes that you are simultaneously a sender and a receiver. That is, you can make verbal responses even as you are deeply involved in listening. To determine your current competence in this area, consider the skills you regularly practice:

1. *Invite additional comments.* Suggest that the speaker add more details or give additional information. Phrases such as “Go on,” “What else?” “How did you feel about that?” and “Did anything else occur?” encourage the speaker to continue to share ideas and information.
2. *Ask questions.* One method of inviting the speaker to continue is to ask direct questions, requesting more in-depth details, definitions, or clarification.
3. *Identify areas of agreement or common experience.* Briefly relate similar past experiences, or briefly explain a similar point of view that you hold. Sharing ideas, attitudes, values, and beliefs is the basis of communication. In addition, such comments demonstrate your understanding.
4. *Vary verbal responses.* Use a variety of responses, such as “Yes,” “I see,” “Go on,” and “Right” instead of relying on one standard, unaltered response, such as “Yes,” “Yes,” “Yes.”
5. *Provide clear verbal responses.* Use specific and concrete words and phrases in your feedback to the speaker. Misunderstandings can occur if you do not provide easily understood responses.
6. *Use descriptive, nonevaluative responses.* Better to say “Your statistics are from an organization that is biased against gun control” (descriptive) than to say “Your speech was a bunch of lies” (evaluative). Trivializing or joking about serious disclosures suggests a negative evaluation of the speaker. Similarly, derogatory remarks are seen as offensive. Acting superior to the speaker by stating that you believe you have a more advanced understanding suggests an evaluative tone.
7. *Provide affirmative and affirming statements.* Comments such as “Yes,” “I see,” “I understand,” and “I know” provide affirmation. Offering praise and specific positive statements demonstrates concern.
8. *Avoid complete silence.* The lack of any response suggests that you are not listening to the speaker. The “silent treatment” induced by sleepiness or lack

of interest may result in defensiveness or anger on the part of the speaker. Appropriate verbal feedback demonstrates your active listening.

9. *Allow the other person the opportunity of a complete hearing.* When you discuss common feelings or experiences, avoid dominating the conversation. Allow the other person to go into depth and detail; give him or her the option of changing the topic under discussion; and let him or her talk without being interrupted.

Use Nonverbal Communication Effectively

Although you demonstrate active listening through verbal skills, the majority of your active-listening ability is shown through nonverbal communication. The following nonverbal skills are essential to your ability to demonstrate active listening. As you listen to another person, have a friend observe you to determine if you are practicing these skills.

Discussion

Question

Does the use of these nonverbal communication skills differ depending on the type of listening situation? Are people more likely to use some nonverbal listening skills when critically listening than when listening for enjoyment?

1. *Demonstrate bodily responsiveness.* Use movement and gestures to show your awareness of the speaker's message. Shaking your head in disbelief, checking the measurements of an object by indicating the size with your hands, and moving toward a person who is disclosing negative information are appropriate bodily responses.
2. *Lean forward.* By leaning toward the speaker, you demonstrate interest in the speaker. A forward lean suggests responsiveness as well as interest. In addition, leaning places you in a physical state of readiness to listen to the speaker.
3. *Use direct body orientation.* Do not angle yourself away from the speaker; instead, sit or stand so that you are directly facing him or her. A parallel body position allows the greatest possibility for observing and listening to the speaker's verbal and nonverbal messages. When you stand or sit at an angle to the speaker, you may be creating the impression that you are attempting to get away or that you are moving away from the speaker. An angled position also blocks your vision and allows you to be distracted by other stimuli in the environment.
4. *Maintain relaxed but alert posture.* Your posture should not be tense or "proper," but neither should it be so relaxed that you appear to be resting. Slouching suggests unresponsiveness; a tense body position suggests nervousness or discomfort; and a relaxed position accompanied by crossed arms and legs, a backward lean in a chair, and a confident facial expression suggests arrogance. Your posture should suggest to others that you are interested and that you are comfortable talking with them.
5. *Establish an open body position.* Sit or stand with your body open to the other person. Crossing your arms or legs may be more comfortable, but that posture frequently suggests that you are closed off psychologically as well as physically. In order to maximize your nonverbal message to the other person that you are "open" to him or her, you should sit or stand without crossing your arms or legs.
6. *Use positive, responsive facial expressions and head movement.* Your face and head will be the speaker's primary focus. The speaker will be observing you, and your facial expressions and head movement will be the key. You can

demonstrate your interest by nodding your head to show interest or agreement. You can use positive and responsive facial expressions, such as smiling and raising your eyebrows.

7. *Establish direct eye contact.* The speaker will be watching your eyes for interest. One of the first signs of a lack of interest is the tendency to be distracted by other stimuli in the environment. For example, an instructor who continually glances out the door of her office, a roommate who sneaks peeks at the television program that is on, or a business executive who regularly looks at his watch is, while appearing to listen, indicating lack of interest. Try to focus on and direct your gaze at the speaker. When you begin to look around the room, you may find any number of other stimuli to distract your attention from the speaker and the message.
8. *Sit or stand close to the speaker.* Establishing close proximity to the speaker has two benefits. First, you put yourself in a position that allows you to hear the other person and that minimizes distracting noises, sights, and other stimuli. Second, you demonstrate your concern or your positive feelings for the speaker. You probably do not stand or sit close to people you do not like or respect, or with whom you do not have common experiences. Close physical proximity enables active listening.
9. *Be vocally responsive.* Change your pitch, rate, inflection, and volume as you respond to the speaker. Making appropriate changes and choices shows that you are actually listening, in contrast to responding in a standard, patterned manner that suggests you are only appearing to listen. The stereotypic picture of a husband and wife at the breakfast table, with the husband, hidden behind a newspaper, responding, “Yes, yes, yes” in a monotone while the wife tells him that their son has shaved his head, she is running off with the mail carrier, and the house is on fire provides a familiar example of the appearance of listening while one is actually oblivious to the speaker’s message.
10. *Provide supportive utterances.* Sometimes you can demonstrate more concern through nonverbal sounds such as “Mmm,” “Mmm-hmm,” and “Uh-huh” than you can by stating “Yes, I understand.” You can easily provide supportive utterances while others are talking or when they pause. You are suggesting to them that you are listening but do not want to interrupt with a verbalization of your own at this particular time. Such sounds encourage the speaker to continue without interruption.

Check Your Understanding

When we listen to others, we are actually engaging in a specialized form of the perception process you read about in chapter 2. Because listening is a specialized form of perceiving, you should engage in perception checking to ensure that your perceptions match what the speaker intends. In the context of listening, rather than calling this perception checking, we might refer to it as checking your understanding. You can check your understanding by practicing these skills:

1. *Ask questions for clarification.* Before testing your understanding of the speaker’s message, make sure you have a clear idea of what he is saying. Begin by asking questions to gain more information. For specific factual information

Class Activity

To practice “Checking Understanding,” show students a short speech, advertisement, or political ad. Have them write down questions they would ask the speaker to check their own understanding of the point being made in the clip.

Group Activity

Have students divide into pairs to discuss future job plans. Students listening should practice verbal communication skills used during listening such as paraphrasing content, paraphrasing intent, asking questions, and so on.

you may use closed questions (such as “yes-no” questions), and for more general information you may ask open-ended questions (questions pertaining to what, when, where, how, and why). Once you have gained sufficient information, you can ask the speaker to check your understanding against what he intended.

2. *Paraphrase the speaker’s message.* Using “I statements,” you attempt to paraphrase what you think the speaker was saying so that she can determine whether your understanding matches what she intended.
3. *Paraphrase the speaker’s intent.* Using “I statements,” you attempt to paraphrase what you interpret as the intent or motivation of the speaker. After hearing your assumptions about his intent, the speaker may talk with you more to refine your understanding.
4. *Identify areas of confusion.* If there are specific aspects of the message that you are still confused about, mention those to the speaker while you are expressing your initial understanding of the message.
5. *Invite clarification and correction.* Asking the speaker to correct your interpretation of the message will invite additional explanation. The ensuing dialogue will help you and the speaker to more effectively share meaning.
6. *Go back to the beginning.* As necessary, return to the first step in this process to check your new understanding of the speaker’s message, intent, and so on. Good listening is a process without clear beginning and ending points, so you should check your understanding at each stage in the process.

Effective Listening in Different Situations

Listening in the Workplace

As our nation has shifted from an industrial-based economy to an information-based economy, effective listening has become recognized as an essential skill for workers. Statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that by 2014 just under 80% of the workforce in the United States will be employed in service-oriented industries like education, health care, retail sales, and state and local government (Berman, 2005). These jobs all have one thing in common—they require employee–customer interaction in which listening skills translate into revenue.

To become a more effective listener in professional situations, you need to apply several of the suggestions mentioned previously. Jennifer Salopek (1999), the president of a corporate training firm, suggests that you do the following:

1. Be aware of when you are not listening.
2. Monitor your nonverbal behaviors to determine whether you are giving appropriate feedback to the speaker.
3. Hear people out and minimize interruptions.
4. Learn to ask nonaggressive questions to elicit more information from the speaker.
5. Summarize what the person said, and check to make sure you understand correctly.

Group Activity

Ask students to talk in groups about their career plans. As part of their discussion, they should talk about ways in which listening skills can enable them to be more effective at their jobs.

In addition to these suggestions, Bob Gunn (2001), president of a consulting firm for many Fortune 500 companies, notes the importance of empathic listening in professional situations:

Feelings are to the quality of hearing as our sense of smell is to the enjoyment of a great meal or our sense of touch is to the expression of love. You are listening deeply when you become “lost in the words” and find yourself experiencing deep feelings of joy, gratitude, surprise, curiosity, warmth, closeness, wonder, beauty, or appreciation. You are hearing at a more profound level. The stronger the feeling, the more profound the understanding. And the more profound the understanding, the clearer the subsequent course of action. (p. 12)

Gunn’s point is that effective listeners must understand not only what their customers are saying but also what they are feeling. Those who do this effectively are able to build stronger relationships with customers and clients.

Listening in the Classroom

Take a moment to think about how often, as a student, you find yourself listening to a lecture. If you were to estimate how much of your time is spent listening to lectures, how much would it be? If you said “a lot,” you would not be alone. Researchers have estimated that college students spend at least 10 hours per week attending lectures (Anderson & Armbruster, 1986). If you take a typical 15 credit/hour load, that 10 hours per week translates into about 80% of your time in class being spent listening to lectures (Armbruster, 2000). The prominence of listening in students’ lives led Vinson and Johnson (1990, p. 116) to coin the phrase “**lecture listening**”—the ability to listen to, mentally process, and recall lecture information.

What constitutes effective lecture listening? Although a variety of answers have been offered, educational researcher Michael Gilbert (1988) provides the following general suggestions:

1. *Find areas of interest in what you are listening to.* Constantly look for how you can use the information.
2. *Remain open.* Avoid the temptation to focus only on the lecturer’s delivery; withhold evaluative judgments until the lecture has finished; recognize your emotional triggers and avoid letting them distract you.
3. *Work at listening.* Capitalize on your mind’s ability to think faster than the lecturer can talk. Mentally summarize and review what has been said, mentally organize information, and find connections to what you already know or are currently learning.
4. *Avoid letting distractions distract.* Monitor your attention and recognize when it is waning. If you are becoming distracted, refocus your attention on the lecturer.
5. *Listen for and note main ideas.* Focus on the central themes of what is being presented, and make notes about those themes. Effective notes outlining the main ideas of a lecture can, in some cases, be more useful than pages of notes containing unorganized details.

In addition to Gilbert’s suggestions, communication researcher Dan O’Hair and colleagues (1988) recommend that you practice flexibility in listening. By practicing your listening skills while watching information-packed documentaries or while

lecture listening

The ability to listen to, mentally process, and recall lecture information.

Discussion Question

What are some of the most common distractions that students face in lecture listening situations? What strategies might they use to overcome those distractions?

lecture cues

Verbal or nonverbal signals that stress points or indicate transitions between ideas during a lecture.



Lecture listening is a common communication behavior for students.

attending public presentations on campus, you will not only become a more effective lecture listener but will also learn valuable information!

A final lecture listening strategy, one that we view as essential, is to take effective notes. Our own research has found that effective note taking during lectures can increase scores on exams by more than 20%—a difference between receiving a C and an A (Titsworth & Kiewra, 1998). Unfortunately, students typically do not record enough notes during a lecture. Research generally shows that less than 40% of the information in a lecture makes it into students' notes. In short, most students are unable to capitalize on the benefits of note taking simply because their notes are incomplete.

Now that you understand why note taking is so important, how can you become a more effective note taker? Most universities have study skills centers where you can find information on different note-taking formats. Although the exact format for note taking might vary from one person to another, the objective is the same. In your notes your goal should be to record both the outline of the lecture—called organizational points—and the details supporting those points. The most

effective way to ensure that you record all of these points is to listen for **lecture cues**—verbal or nonverbal signals that stress points or indicate transitions between ideas during a lecture. Table 5.4 summarizes various types of lecture cues commonly used by teachers. While taking notes you should listen and watch for these types of cues.

TABLE 5.4 COMMON LECTURE CUES USED BY TEACHERS

TYPE OF CUE	EXAMPLE	MAIN USES
Written cues		
Outlines	Outline of lecture on transparency or PowerPoint slide	Indicate main and subordinate ideas
Words/phrases	Term written on the chalkboard	Stress important terms and accompanying definitions
Verbal importance cues	<i>"Now, and this will be on the exam next week, we will explore . . ."</i>	Stress important concepts deemed essential for recall/understanding
Semantic cues	<i>"Here is an example [definition, explanation, conclusion, implication, or illustration] of uncertainty reduction theory in action . . ."</i>	Signal common types of details that make up the lecture content
Organizational cues	<i>"The third thing I want to discuss today is . . ."</i>	Orally provide indications of main and subordinate points in a lecture
Nonverbal cues	Holding up two fingers when saying "I will discuss two concepts today . . ."	Can serve any of the functions of nonverbal behaviors discussed in the chapter on nonverbal communication

Our research has examined the importance of cues for students (Titsworth & Kiewra, 1998). We taught a group of students about organizational cues and had them listen for those cues and take notes during a videotaped lecture. Students in another group were not informed about organizational cues but viewed and took notes during the same lecture. Students who were taught about organizational cues recorded four times the number of organizational points and twice the number of details in their notes. These students were able to capitalize on their note-taking effectiveness; they received the equivalent of an A on a quiz about the lecture. Their counterparts, who were unaware of and did not listen for organizational cues, received the equivalent of a C. Our experiment looked at the effects of teaching students about organizational cues only. Imagine what could happen if these students had been taught about all types of lecture cues! Fortunately, you are now equipped with this information.

Listening to Media

Think about how much time you spend watching television; listening to the radio; reading magazines, newspapers, or books; reading and writing e-mail; chatting online; or just surfing the web. Many of us might avoid that question because the answer might frighten us. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) notes that children and adolescents spend more than 20 hours per week watching TV, which translates into approximately 3 hours per day. When including other forms of media, such as listening to music, playing video games, and using the Internet, this daily intake of media jumps to over 6½ hours per day, or over 42 hours per week. By the time you started your first college class (around the age of 18), you had viewed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence on TV alone. This intake of mediated messages does not diminish. By the time you reach age 70, it is estimated that you will have spent the equivalent of 7–10 years watching TV.

Given the quantity of mediated communication we are exposed to each day, we must become critical consumers of such information. Think how much money you would spend if you “bought in” to every commercial you saw, or think of how much time it would take for you to read every e-mail message you get (including “junk” e-mail). Simply put, good listening behaviors are essential because mediated communication is so prevalent.

One way to be an effective listener in a mediated culture is to have information literacy. **Information literacy** is defined by the American Library Association (2001) in the following way: “To be information literate an individual must recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the information needed.” According to this definition, information-literate individuals are able to think critically, know when and how to find more information, and know how to evaluate information.

Mediated communication is not limited to advertising and television. In 2005 an estimated 1.1 billion people worldwide used the Internet (ClickZ, 2004). How do people use the Internet? Communication scholars at UCLA conducted a comprehensive study of various issues related to Internet use. They found that nearly 55% of Americans use the Internet for e-mail and that people feel the Internet increases their ability to stay in contact with others. Additionally, just over one quarter of Internet users indicated that they have online friends whom they would not have met through other means (UCLA Internet Report, 2000). The implication

Homework Assignment

Have students select their next teacher and tally how often they use each type of lecture cue discussed in Table 5.4. Which cues do students think are most important or effective during lectures?

Class Discussion

How do you demonstrate good listening behaviors online? During face-to-face interaction you are able to use verbal and nonverbal feedback to express agreement, confusion, and so on. How do you accomplish this during online communication?

information literacy

The ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the information needed.



Differences in Active Listening

The way individuals actively listen can vary from culture to culture. College students in Finland, for example, listen carefully and take notes but do not respond overtly while being addressed by the professor. In fact, they remain quite expressionless. In some Native American tribes and in some Hispanic groups, people avert their eyes when listening; but in groups such as northern whites and blacks, people tend to maintain eye contact while actively listening. How would you describe the norms of listening in your culture, community, or school?

of these data is that the Internet, once a form of mass communication, has become an important tool for interpersonal communication as well.

When communicating online with others, how can you be an effective listener? The principal problem with online communication—whether the mode is e-mail, chat rooms, listservs, or discussion groups—is that nonverbal communication is difficult. Recall that nonverbal communication provides significant clues about another person’s emotions and feelings. Without the ability to see and hear the other person, how can you tell what that person is really thinking? To successfully listen for relational messages online, you must look for obvious clues such as **emoticons**—typographic symbols showing emotional meaning. Examples of emoticons include a “☺” at the end of a paragraph and ALL CAPITAL LETTERS to indicate “shouting.” Because nonverbal communication is more difficult online, it is important to check your perceptions before responding to messages.

emoticons

Typographic symbols showing emotional meaning.

Listening in a Second Language



Many of the suggestions provided in this chapter are common for both native and ESL speakers. However, if you are a non-native speaker, some understanding of how to further develop your listening skills can speed your progress as an effective listener. Research suggests that second-language listening development requires two skills: vocabulary comprehension and metacognitive awareness (Vandergrift, 2006). Vocabulary comprehension is more than just memorizing lists of terms. Rather, vocabulary is strengthened by recognizing the sounds of words and associating those sounds with their meaning. Being immersed in a new culture will assist you in developing such connections, particularly if you seek out and engage in sustained conversations with others. You can also use television and other media to broaden your listening experiences and assist in vocabulary development.

In addition to developing your vocabulary, you should also try to develop your metacognitive skills. Metacognition is your ability to use “mental strategies” to assist in quickly determining the meaning of words. Learning to decipher words by drawing inferences on their meaning from the context and other words around them is one such strategy. Another example of metacognition is drawing parallels between English vocabulary and your native vocabulary. Through such strategies you will make quicker inferences about what new terms mean and will be able to listen more efficiently.

Of course, if you have difficulty listening because the other person is speaking rapidly or using words that you have not heard, you should feel comfortable telling the person. Adaptation to language differences is the responsibility of everyone involved in a communication situation, and you should not take on the entire challenge of trying to make the interaction succeed.

Although effective listening requires you to adapt your verbal, nonverbal and perception-checking skills to specific situations like the workplace, classroom, and mediated environments, you must also take care to enact ethical listening behaviors. To be an ethical listener, you should practice the following behaviors (adapted from Rehling, 2004):

How Can You Be an Ethical Listener?

1. *Recognize the sources of your own conversational habits.* Your family, school, and other life experiences have allowed you to develop certain habits that in some situations could be strengths and in others could represent areas for improvement. Recognizing those habits will allow you to more fully adapt to those with whom you are communicating.
2. *Monitor your communication to recognize when you are engaging in poor listening behaviors.* Perhaps the most important step to becoming an ethical listener is recognizing that you must work hard to be a good listener—a step that begins with an awareness of what you are doing in the situation.
3. *Apply general ethical principles to how you respond.* Planning your responses so that you are respectful to others is an example of how your own personal ethics can influence your listening behaviors.
4. *Adapt to others.* Recognize that other people also have unique communication styles and that you might need to adapt your listening behaviors so that you can fully understand what they are trying to say.

Chapter Review & Study Guide

SUMMARY

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Hearing is the physical act of receiving a sound. We hear all of the noises around us. Listening is the active process of receiving, paying attention to, assigning meaning to, and responding to sounds. Listening is an active process whereas hearing is reflexive.
- ▶ Understanding listening is important because effective listening behaviors are related to success in our personal relationships, our workplace productivity, and even our ability to think clearly.
- ▶ Listening is generally divided into active, empathic, critical, and enjoyment listening. Active listening, which is listening with a purpose, includes both empathic and critical listening. Empathic listening is when you are attempting to understand another person. For example, hearing your best friend complain about the behaviors of a significant other involves empathic listening. Critical listening requires evaluating a speaker's message for accuracy, meaningfulness, and usefulness. Listening to a salesperson's pitch requires careful critical listening behaviors. In addition to listening for pragmatic reasons, we also listen to things like music for enjoyment purposes.
- ▶ A variety of internal and external barriers prevent many of us from being effective listeners. One barrier is noise, which includes both physical distractions and internal distractions. Physical distractions are any audible noises in the communication environment. Internal distractions can include mental, factual, or semantic distractions. Perceptions of others and your own behaviors can also become barriers to effective listening.
- ▶ Critical thinking involves careful analysis of both the communication situation and the message of the speaker. Analyzing the situation requires that you carefully understand the communication situation in which you are involved. Analyzing the message involves evaluating the arguments and supporting material presented by the speaker, whether the speaker is presenting observations or inferences, and whether or not the speaker is credible.
- ▶ Verbal and nonverbal communication can be used to help you improve your listening behaviors. Asking questions, inviting additional comments, using descriptive responses, and providing affirming statements are all examples of effective verbal strategies. Being nonverbally responsive, using positive facial expressions, making direct eye contact, and providing positive vocal utterances are effective nonverbal strategies. Use of such strategies will encourage the speaker to continue speaking and providing you with information so that you can check your understanding.
- ▶ General verbal and nonverbal communication strategies can be adapted to specific listening situations including the workplace, classroom, and mediated environment.
- ▶ Ethical listening means that you should recognize and monitor your own communication style, apply general ethical principles to your responses, and adapt your communication style to others.

KEY TERMS

Go to the *Online Learning Center* at www.mhhe.com/pearson3 to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Active listening
Automatic attention
Critical listening
Critical thinking
Emoticon
Empathic listening
First-person observation

Hearing
Information literacy
Lecture cues
Lecture listening
Listening
Listening for enjoyment
Long-term memory

Schema
Second-person observation
Selective attention
Short-term memory
Source credibility
Working memory

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Hearing is a _____ process, and listening is a _____ process.
 - a. mental; physical
 - b. mental; psychological
 - c. physical; mental
 - d. physical; physical
2. Which of the following statements is true?
 - a. Personal and business relationships are not affected by listening.
 - b. When communicating, college students spend over half of their lives listening.
 - c. Listening constitutes only a small fraction of our communication activities.
 - d. Listening does not contribute to recognizing deceit.
3. After your brain has sorted sound waves by importance, it processes the material in a part of your consciousness termed
 - a. working memory
 - b. selective attention
 - c. long-term recall
 - d. short-term memory
4. When you are listening and attempting to understand the other person's worldview, what type of listening are you utilizing?
 - a. active
 - b. empathic
 - c. critical
 - d. for enjoyment
5. If you are thinking about what happened last weekend at college while listening to your mom on the phone, you are exhibiting what type of barrier to listening?
 - a. stereotypes
 - b. egocentrism
 - c. personal bias
 - d. mental distraction
6. Which gender tends to listen in order to solve problems, is less attentive to nonverbal cues, and interrupts to switch topics?
 - a. men
 - b. women
 - c. both genders
 - d. neither gender
7. Critical thinking
 - a. focuses solely on the details instead of the main point
 - b. ignores the context in which communication is occurring
 - c. is important when making judgments about the message being presented
 - d. is only associated with listening
8. Asking questions to clarify information, paraphrasing messages, and identifying confusing areas are examples of
 - a. barriers to listening
 - b. listening for enjoyment
 - c. techniques for checking your understanding of a message
 - d. information literacy
9. Suggestions for lecture listening include
 - a. focusing on the lecturer's delivery and avoiding summarizing and reviewing the information
 - b. letting your attention stray in order to think creatively, listening for details, and ignoring lecture cues
 - c. avoiding taking notes so you can focus on the lecture and the message delivery
 - d. finding areas of interest to you, avoiding distractions, and listening for main ideas
10. The ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information is an important trait known as
 - a. critical thinking
 - b. information literacy
 - c. hearing
 - d. selective attention

Answers:

1. (c); 2. (b); 3. (a); 4. (b); 5. (d); 6. (a); 7. (c); 8. (c); 9. (d); 10. (b)

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Identify and define some barriers to listening that you have been aware of in your own experiences. Were you able to overcome the barriers?
2. Which of the verbal and nonverbal communication skills do you make use of in your conversations?

Which of them do others use when conversing with you? Are there any that you like or dislike more than others in either situation?

SELF-QUIZ

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at www.mhhe.com/pearson3.

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