

## levels of listening - 'effective listening'

There are different types of listening. Typically they are presented as levels of listening.

Various people have constructed listening models. Below is an attempt to encompass and extend good current listening theory in an accessible and concise way. Bear in mind that listening is rarely confined merely to words. Sometimes what you are listening to will include other sounds or intonation or verbal/emotional noises. Sometimes listening involves noticing a silence or a pause - nothing - 'dead air' as it's known in broadcasting. You might instead be listening to a musical performance, or an engine noise, or a crowded meeting, for the purpose of understanding and assessing what is actually happening or being said. Also, listening in its fullest sense, as you will see below, ultimately includes many non-verbal and non-audible factors, such as body language, facial expressions, reactions of others, cultural elements, and the reactions of the speaker and the listeners to each other.

In summary first:

1. **passive/not listening** - noise in background - ignoring
2. **pretend listening** - also called 'responsive listening' - using stock nods and smiles and uhum, yes, of course, etc.
3. **biased/projective listening** - 'selective listening' and intentionally disregarding/dismissing the other person's views
4. **misunderstood listening** - unconsciously overlaying your own interpretations and making things fit when they don't
5. **attentive listening** - personally-driven fact gathering and analysis often with manipulation of the other person
6. **active listening** - understanding feelings and gathering facts for largely selfish purposes
7. **empathic listening** - understanding and checking facts and feelings, usually to listener's personal agenda
8. **facilitative listening** - listening, understanding fully, and helping, with the other person's needs uppermost

Full version:

<b>levels and types of listening</b>		
1	<b>Passive Listening or Not Listening</b>	Noise in the background - you are not concentrating on the sounds at all and nothing is registering with you. Ignoring would be another way to describe this type of listening. There is nothing wrong with passive listening if it's truly not important, but passive listening - which we might more aptly call Not Listening - is obviously daft and can be downright dangerous if the communications are important.
2	<b>Pretend Listening</b>	You are not concentrating and will not remember anything because you are actually daydreaming or being distracted by something else even though you will occasionally nod or agree using 'stock' safe replies. This is a common type of listening that grown-ups do with children. This level of listening is called <b>Responsive Listening</b> in some other models, although Pretend Listening is arguably a more apt term, since the word 'responsive' suggests a much higher level of care in the listener, and Pretend Listening reflects that there is an element of deceit on the part of the listener towards the speaker. You will generally know when you are Pretend Listening because the speaker will see that glazed look in your eyes and say firmly something like, "Will you please Listen to me. I'm talking to you!" Especially if the speaker is a small child.
3	<b>Biased Listening or Projective Listening</b>	You are listening and taking in a certain amount of information, but because you already have such firm opposing or different views, or a resistance to the speaker, you are not allowing anything that is said or any noises made to influence your attitude and level of knowledge and understanding. You are projecting your position onto the speaker and the words. You would do this typically because you are under pressure or very defensive. You would normally be aware that you are doing this, which is a big difference between the next level and this one. This third level of listening is also called <b>Selective Listening</b> in some other models.

4	<b>Misunderstood Listening</b>	<p>You have an interest and perhaps some flexibility in respect of the words spoken and your reactions to them, but because you are not thinking objectively and purely you are putting your own interpretation on what you are hearing - making the words fit what you expect or want them to fit. This is a type of projective listening like level three above, but you will not normally be aware that you are doing it until it is pointed out to you. This is a type of listening that is prone to big risks because if you are not made aware of your failings you will leave the discussion under a very wrong impression of the facts and the feelings of the other person. It's a deluded form of listening. Arrogant people like politicians and company directors who surround themselves with agreeable accomplices can fall into seriously ingrained habits of Misunderstood Listening.</p>
5	<b>Attentive 'Data-Only' Listening</b>	<p>You listen only to the content, and fail to receive all the non-verbal sounds and signals, such as tone of voice, facial expression, reaction of speaker to your own listening and reactions. This is fine when the purpose of the communication is merely to gain/convey cold facts and figures, but it is very inadequate for other communications requiring an assessment of feelings and motives, and the circumstances underneath the superficial words or sounds. Attentive Listening is a higher level of listening than Misunderstood Listening because it can gather reliable facts, but it fails to gather and suitably respond to emotions and feelings, and the situation of the other person, which is especially risky if the other person's position is potentially troublesome. This is a common form of listening among 'push and persuade' sales people. Attentive Data-Only Listening is typically driven by a strong personal results motive. It can be highly manipulative and forceful. This type of listening wins battles and loses wars - i.e., it can achieve short-term gains, but tends to wreck chances of building anything constructive and sustainable.</p>
6	<b>Active Listening</b>	<p>This is listening to words, intonation, and observing <u>body language</u> and facial expressions, and giving feedback - but critically this type of listening is empty of two-way emotional involvement, or empathy. There is no transmitted sympathy or identification with the other persons feelings and emotional needs. This listening gathers facts and to a limited extent feelings too, but importantly the listener does not incorporate the feelings into reactions. This can be due to the listener being limited by policy or rules, or by personal insecurity, selfishness, or emotional immaturity. Active listening often includes a manipulative motive or tactics, which are certainly not present in the empathic level next and higher, and which is a simple way to differentiate between Active and Empathic listening.</p>
7	<b>Empathic Listening or Empathetic Listening</b>	<p>You are listening with full attention to the sounds, and all other relevant signals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tone of voice</li> <li>• other verbal aspects - e.g., pace, volume, breathlessness, flow, style, emphasis</li> <li>• facial expression</li> <li>• body language</li> <li>• cultural or ethnic or other aspects of the person which would affect the way their communications and signals are affecting you</li> <li>• feeling - not contained in a single sense - this requires you to have an overall collective appreciation through all relevant senses (taste is perhaps the only sense not employed here) of how the other person is feeling</li> <li>• you able to see and feel the situation from the other person's position</li> </ul> <p>You are also reacting and giving feedback and checking understanding with the speaker.</p>

		<p>You will be summarising and probably taking notes and agreeing the notes too if it's an important discussion. You will be honest in expressing disagreement but at the same time expressing genuine understanding, which hopefully (if your listening empathy is of a decent standard) will keep emotions civilized and emotionally under control even for very difficult discussions. You will be instinctively or consciously bringing elements of <u>NLP</u> (neuro-linguistic programming) and <u>Transactional Analysis</u> into the exchange. It will also be possible (for one who knows) to interpret the exchange from the perspective of having improved the relationship and mutual awareness in terms of the <u>Johari Window</u> concept.</p>
8	<p><b>Facilitative Listening</b></p>	<p>This goes beyond even empathic listening because it implies and requires that you are able to extend an especially helpful approach to the other person or people. This element is not necessarily present in empathic listening. Another crucial difference is the capability to interpret the cognisance - self-awareness - of the speaker, and the extent to which you are hearing and observing genuine 'adult' sounds and signals (as distinct from emotionally skewed outputs), and to weigh the consequences of the other person's behaviour even if the other person cannot. In this respect you are acting rather like a protector or guardian, in the event that the other person is not being true to themselves. Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis theory comes close to explaining the aspects of mood and 'game-playing' which many people exhibit a lot unconsciously, and which can be very difficult notice using only the aims of and skills within empathic listening. This does not mean that you are making decisions or recommendations for the other person - it means you are exercising caution on their behalf, which is vital if you are in a position of responsibility or influence towards them. Facilitative Listening also requires that you have thought and prepared very carefully about what you will ask and how you will respond, even if you pause to think and prepare your responses during the exchange. Many people do not give themselves adequate pause for thought when listening and responding at an empathic level. Facilitative listening contains a strong additional element of being interested in helping the other person see and understand their options and choices. It's a powerful thing. Facilitative Listening is not generally possible if the circumstances (for example organisational rules and policy, matters of law, emergency, etc) demand a faster resolution and offer little or no leeway for extending help. There is a suggestion of transcendence and self-actualization - as described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory - within the approach to Facilitative Listening. It is devoid of any selfish personal motive, other than to extend help, rather than achieve any sort of normal material gain. The other person's interests are at the forefront, which cannot truthfully be said of any of the preceding levels of listening. Facilitative Listening is not an age or money-related capability. It is an attitude of mind.</p>

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