

LISTENING TIP SHEET

- Don't interrupt others - People have different communicate styles - so may be non-linear, some may need to process before they speak, or others might speak slowly. Even if you think you know where the other person is going, communicate respect by letting him finish.
- Use active listening strategies - Make a concerted effort to give the other person your full attention. Then, periodically paraphrase back what you heard her say, to ensure that you comprehended her intended message.
- If it's not a good time, let the other person know - If someone is coming to talk to you, and it just isn't a good time, let him know that you have a lot going on, and communicate when it would be a good time for the two of you to catch up.
- Get rid of distractions - Turn away from the computer screen, close your door, and do whatever else you need to do to give the other person your undivided attention.
- Watch out for your nonverbal communication - Does your nonverbal behavior indicate that you are listening to the other person? Do you look open and receptive, or disinterested? Are you maintaining adequate eye contact, or are you absorbed with something else? Are you checking your smartphone? Are you nodding quickly, in the hope that he will hurry up? Monitor your nonverbal behavior to create an open environment in which the other person feels heard.
- Listen for feeling - As you are listening to the other person's words, be aware of the feelings that could be underlying what she is saying. How do you think she feels? You might choose to make an empathetic statement in response to her feeling such as, "That sounds really frustrating" or "You sound really confident in what you're saying."
- Watch out for changing the subject - Sometimes, someone else's thought might trigger a thought in you that leads you down a whole different path. Instead of highjacking the conversation and changing the subject, you might choose to make a quick note of your thought so you don't forget it, then continue with the other person's train of thought. Or, if you change the subject, label what you are doing

by saying something like, “You know, that sparked a thought in me about something else. Do you mind if I share?” (Make sure not to do this too often, or you may come across as self-absorbed).

- Ask questions to deepen understanding - Asking appropriate questions helps you to gather information, and communicates to the other person that you are interested in what he has to say. While a conversation should never be an inquisition, questions that come from a genuine place of interest help to validate the other person.
- Make sure there is adequate give and take in your conversations - Are you someone who tends to talk a lot? Aim for giving yourself and the other person equal amounts of air time in the conversation so you can guard against coming across as rude or overly dominant.
- Practice mindful listening - Mindfulness is the practice of staying in the present moment, without judgment. Instead of coming up with an argument or thinking about what you are going to say next (which is something that a lot of us do), practice giving the other person the gift of simply listening to understand. At the same time, check in with yourself periodically to see any judgments or feelings that may be coming up. Having a greater awareness of your internal state can help you to be intentional about how you respond in an instance, as opposed to reacting blindly.