

# LISTENING ACTIVELY

**The following eight rules, if consistently applied, can increase your understanding and make your communication style more professional.**

1. Convince yourself that listening does not come naturally and that you're going to have to work at it.
2. Begin with the attitude that everyone has something important to say. Find out what there is in their communication that is helpful and interesting to you.
3. Avoid judgment on either the content of the message or the method of transmission. Prejudging often turns to bigotry—that is, a closed mind.
4. Examine your motives. Do you only listen to what has value for you? Could you listen to help the speaker, even if your listening did nothing more than communicate, "I value you and what you say?" Better still would be a motive of using what you hear to help the other person.
5. Try to minimize distractions. Shift the site of the exchange, if possible. Where distractions can't be avoided, increase concentration with eye contact and posture.
6. Do something active. Note taking can assist in fixing ideas in your mind. But you must work developing an effective note-taking system or part of the message will be lost in the process.
7. Ask questions. This maintains the attention of both sender and receiver. It also requires activity on your part to formulate good questions. Your questions give process feedback to the sender that you are hearing and understanding.
8. Try to summarize or restate what you have heard. Reflect back the sender's content and emotional tone. Summarize the message and check to see, "Is that what you mean?" Go over your notes with a couple of reviews to fix ideas securely in long term memory.

**\*From "You're In Charge: A Guide for Business and Personal Success."  
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