

SUBJECT: Effective and Active Listening

CONDITION: Classroom environment

STANDARD: 1. Describe effective and active listening.
2. Identify deterrents to effective listening.
3. Identify the elements of effective and active listening.
4. Identify methods of enhancing listening.
5. Identify the methods used to test understanding of a message.

TYPE OF INSTRUCTION: Small Group Discussion

TIME OF INSTRUCTION: 1 Hour

NOTE: Recommend no more than 10-15 minutes be allocated to each PE in order to adequately cover the material contained in this lesson.

LEAD IN: Effective and active listening will play a major role to you in performing your duties. You will come in contact with many soldiers, from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Your duties, in addition to being a good communicator, will also require you to be an effective and active listener. The communications process is easily blocked when the communicator feels as though they are being ignored. An excellent example is the wife or husband who reads the newspaper while sitting at the breakfast table and ignores their spouse's comments or conversation. During this lesson you will learn some methods, if used, will improve your listening skills.

PART I. EFFECTIVE AND ACTIVE LISTENING

SHOW SLIDE #1

EFFECTIVE AND ACTIVE LISTENING

- **Effective listening is the listening to the words of the speaker and the meaning of the words.**
- **Active listening is a process in which the listener takes active responsibility to understand the content and feeling of what is being said and then checks with the speaker to see if he/she heard what the speaker intended to communicate.**

1. **Effective and Active Listening.** Effective listening is the listening to the words of the speaker and the meaning of the words. Active listening is a process in which the listener takes active responsibility to understand the content and feeling of what is being said and then checks with the speaker to see if he/she heard what the speaker intended to communicate.

2. As a leader you may be required to interview individuals within your organization; thus effective and active listening is an essential skill in the communication process. The average person listens with only 22-24% effectiveness, but listening amounts to 45% of the communication process. Listening is

one of the most neglected of the communication skills. Many poor listeners have tried to place the entire burden of the speaker/listener process on the speaker. In other words, “entertain me or I’m out of here.”

3. To understand how to be an effective listener, you first have to understand some of the deterrents to effective listening. These deterrents include:

NOTE: You may expand on some or all of the examples listed below. Have someone give some examples, and have them share with the group how they felt when it happen to them.

- a. Assuming in advance the subject is uninteresting and unimportant.
- b. Mentally criticizing the speaker’s delivery.
- c. Getting over stimulated when questioning or opposing an idea.
- d. Listening only for facts; wanting to skip the details.
- e. Outlining everything.
- f. Pretending to be attentive, not paying attention.
- g. Permitting the speaker to be inaudible or incomplete.
- h. Avoiding technical messages.
- i. Overreacting to certain words and phrases. The following are some examples of trigger words: nigger, spick, wetback, broad, etc.
- j. Withdrawing attention or daydreaming.

SHOW SLIDE #2

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE AND ACTIVE LISTENING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content• Feelings• Process• Clarification

4. The concept for effective and active listening is comprised of 4 elements. These elements are:

a. **Content.** The subject the speaker is addressing. The words and the meaning of the words. Use words that are not complicated and are easy to understand by the others. If you are unsure of the meaning of a word, don’t use it. If you hear a word and are not sure of the meaning, write it down and look it up afterwards. Another method is to ask the speaker the meaning.

b. **Feelings.** The emotions the speaker has when discussing the subject. Is it informative, funny, sincere, etc.? What is the underlying message from the speaker?

c. **Process.** The manner the speaker delivers the subject matter. This can be oral, written, symbolic, nonverbal, or a combination. Are the oral, written, nonverbal and symbolic gestures congruent? Does the speaker affirm or negate the message.

d. **Clarification.** The ability of the individual listening to ask questions and to seek understanding of the subject matter. Clarify any questions that are raised in your mind. Did you understand and comprehend the text?

PART II. METHODS FOR ENHANCING LISTENING

SHOW SLIDE #3

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check attitude and atmosphere• Keep the channel open and avoid short circuits• Listening requires response from listener• Keep the door open

1. To be an effective active listener requires the use of 4 basic skills. These skills in themselves are not difficult, but will require the listener to be aware of when receiving information or communications. These 4 skills are:

a. **Check attitude and atmosphere.** Be open and listen to the speaker. Set aside your opinions and reserve judgment until the speaker is finished. Set an atmosphere that tells the speaker you are interested in what he or she has to say, and you are ready to listen.

b. **Keep the channel open and avoid short circuits.** Listen to others as you would want them to listen to you. Have you ever talked with someone and felt that he or she was not really listening to you? Have you ever been counseled by someone only to have the phone ring, other people interrupt, or the counselor seem preoccupied with something else? Could this send a message the counselor doesn't really care to listen to you? Have you ever done this to someone you were counseling?

c. **Listening demands responses on the part of the listener** - the kind of response that reassures the speaker they are being received and interpreted. Do you ask questions to ensure you understood the entire text? Do you keep quiet because you are afraid of appearing foolish or inattentive?

d. **Keep the door open.** Let the person know you are prepared to listen again. Do you keep the door open or slam the door by your reactions or words?

2. There are many methods or behaviors you may use to improve your listening ability. Some of these include:

a. Try to understand the intent and listen for the main points and summarize mentally. This will compensate for the barrier of partial listening. Concentrate the extra thinking time on the message itself and on the intent of the speaker. Summarize mentally the verbal and nonverbal message sent by the speaker.

b. Listen now and clarify later. This will compensate for the barrier of emotional blackouts. You may find the speaker is more on “your side” than you thought. However, if you are tuned out because of an emotional trigger then you may miss a clarifying point the speaker makes later.

c. By listening and thinking, you can elaborate on the simple message by directing attention to the missing segments and by making more subtle interpretations. Few messages will be exactly tuned to your wavelength. Some will be complex and others too simple. By listening and thinking you can fill in the missing segments. Filling in the missing segments will help you to better understand the message the speaker is trying to convey.

d. Concentrate on the message, not the person. Concentrating on the message and not the person will help you to compensate for the speaker dismissal. If the person has something to say it doesn't matter if he or she is short or tall, fat or thin, colorful or drab. Unless you listen to the message you won't know if it can assist you personally in your work situation, or in a way you never considered.

e. Mentally trade places with the speaker and analyze your reactions when you realize you're pretending to listen. If you mentally trade places with the speaker this will help you compensate for the barrier of faking attention. How do you feel when someone is ignoring you when you are speaking? Do some of your reactions include frustration, confusion, hostility, and defensiveness? Trade places with the speaker and permit him or her the courtesy of your attention.

f. If you listen attentively, you can usually remember the three or four main points the speaker hoped to communicate. Listening attentively can help you compensate for pencil listening. Use your pencil to note ideas and a few facts. Forget the detailed notes unless you plan to give the same speech. In this case, ask the speaker for a copy of their speech or notes.

NOTE: Conduct Practical Exercise #1.

SHOW SLIDE #4

METHODS TO TEST UNDERSTANDING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parroting• Paraphrasing• Clarifying

3. To test your understanding of what is being said, it is recommended that you use one of the following methods:

a. **Parroting.** Repeating verbatim what you heard.

b. **Paraphrasing.** Reflecting back to the speaker what you heard in your own words.

c. **Clarifying.** Checking with the speaker to confirm what you think you heard or to check out what you do not understand.

NOTE: Conduct Practical Exercise #2.

CLOSING: During this lesson you have learned the importance of effective and active listening. Effective and active listening is an important skill you will need to utilize if you want to communicate with soldiers of your unit. Summarize lesson objectives. Discuss how you used many of these

communication skills while conducting this class. Discuss how soldiers feel about this issue. What experiences/problems do they have to share?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE #1
“THE CASH REGISTER EXERCISE”

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights. | T | F |
| 2. The robber was a man. | T | F |
| 3. The man did not demand money. | T | F |
| 4. The man who opened the cash register was the owner. | T | F |
| 5. The storeowner scooped up the contents of the cash register and ran away. | T | F |
| 6. Someone opened a cash register. | T | F |
| 7. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away. | T | F |
| 8. While the cash register contained money, the story does not state how much. | T | F |
| 9. The robber demanded money of the owner. | T | F |
| 10. The story concerns a series of events in which only three persons are referred to; the owner of the store, a man who demanded money, and a member of the police force. | T | F |
| 11. The following events in the story are true; someone demanded money, a cash register was opened, its contents were scooped up, and a man dashed out of the store. | T | F |

PRACTICAL EXERCISE #1
“THE CASH REGISTER EXERCISE”

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Objective:

To demonstrate most adults listen at about 25% level of efficiency.

Guidance:

Provide Handout #1, The Cash Register Exercise, to students and ask them to answer the questions in the handout based on the following story (Read the following story to the students. You may need to read it two or three times.):

"A businessman had just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up, and the man sped away. A member of the police force was notified promptly."

Questions:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights. | T | F |
| 2. The robber was a man. | T | F |
| 3. The man did not demand money. | T | F |
| 4. The man who opened the cash register was the owner. | T | F |
| 5. The storeowner scooped up the contents of the cash register and ran away. | T | F |
| 6. Someone opened a cash register. | T | F |
| 7. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away. | T | F |
| 8. While the cash register contained money, the story does not state how much. | T | F |
| 9. The robber demanded money of the owner. | T | F |
| 10. The story concerns a series of events in which only three persons are referred to; the owner of the store, a man who demanded money, and a member of the police force. | T | F |
| 11. The following events in the story are true; someone demanded money, a cash register was opened, its contents were scooped up, and a man dashed out of the store. | T | F |

Answer key:

1. A businessman turned off the lights. How do we know he is the owner?
2. A man demanded money. How do we know he was the robber?
3. A man demanded money.
4. The owner opened the cash register, but was the owner a man?
5. Who did scoop up the contents of the cash register? Is it possible the owner did?
6. Someone did open the cash register.

Option 5 Teacher Information

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7. Who did scoop up the contents of the cash register?
8. What was in the cash register?
9. From whom did the man demand money?
10. What about the businessman?
11. A man sped away. What man? From where?

Discussion Questions:

1. You all heard the same story, yet few answered the questions correctly. Why?
2. Why didn't we listen? Is this typical? What can we do to sharpen our listening skills?
3. If I had told you that initially you could win some money, would you have listened more attentively? Why? How can we ensure better listening without rewards, e.g., money?

Materials Required:

Handout #1

Approximate Time:

10-15 minutes.

**PRACTICAL EXERCISE #2
FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS
INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE**

Objective:

To illustrate the difficulty of attentive listening even in simple exercises.

Guidance:

Ask the group to take a sheet of blank paper and number from 1-15. They are to listen carefully to each question and do all calculations mentally, writing only the answers down on the paper. Read the following questions at a normal rate of speech.

1. Start with 8; double it; add 4; divide by 5; the answer is ____.
2. Start with 11; subtract 3; add 4; add 3; divide by 3; the answer is ____.
3. Start with 15; add 10; divide by 5; multiply by 7; add 7; divide 4; the answer is ____.
4. From a number that is 4 larger than 13, add 5; divide by 2; subtract 3; the answer is ____.
5. From a number that is 2 smaller than 9, add 7; add 5; multiply by 2; divide by 4; the answer is ____.
6. Add 7 to 12; subtract 9; add 10; subtract 13; double it; the answer is ____.
7. Add 4 to 5; add 7; add 7; add 9; add 9; divide by 4; the answer is ____.
8. Subtract 7 from 11; add 5; multiply by 5; subtract 15; subtract 10; add 1; the answer is ____.
9. From a number that is 7 larger than 7, add 3; divide by 5; multiply by 4; add 1; the answer is ____.
10. Take the square root of 37; add 5; add 14; divide by 5; add 3; divide by 4; the answer is ____.
11. From a number that is 5 larger than 7, subtract 3; add 2; add 3; add 9; divide by 2; the answer is ____.
12. In the series of number, 4-7-8-7-9-12, the first three numbers were ____.
13. In the series of numbers, 4-7-9-7-7-3, the sum of the first three numbers is ____.
14. In the series of numbers, 7-9-7-8-4-9-7-10 the lowest odd number is ____.
15. In the series of numbers, 4-5-7-8-7-2-1-9, the sum of these numbers is ____.

Discussion Questions:

1. How many of us just “quit listening” when we got confused or “lost” with a question?

Option 5 Teacher Information

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2. Have you seen times when people seem to “quit listening” when you’re giving instructions?
3. What can we do to prevent this loss of attention or to encourage active listening?

Answers:

- (1) 4; (2) 5; (3) 9; (4) 8; (5) 9; (7) 12; (7) 10; (8) 27; (9) 13; (10) 2; (11) 11;
(12) 4-7-8; (13) 19; (14) 7; (15) 42.

Materials Required:

Questions found on the following page

Approximate Time Required:

5-10 minutes