

Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

LISTENING: BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

Passive listeners do more hearing than listening; they know someone is speaking; they just can't make sense out of it. Passive listeners often expect instructors to motivate and interest them in the topic.

Active listeners pay attention to what they hear and try to understand it. They are usually self-motivated and expect to find their own reasons for being interested in a lecture.

To be an active listener:

Decide to listen.

By deciding to listen, you will increase your memory's power because you will have also decided to remember what you hear.

Listen with a positive frame of mind.

Expect to find something in the lecture that will interest you, be useful to you, and will expand your understanding of the course material.

Focus your attention on the speaker.

If you keep your eyes on the speaker, you will be able to ignore other distractions.
Keep listening to the speaker even when you disagree.
Forgive weaknesses in the speaker's style and focus on what the speaker says.

Encourage the speaker.

Look interested.
Sit straight and make eye contact.
Ask questions and make comments.
Your interest encourages the speaker which in turn makes the lecture more interesting.

Take good notes.

Taking notes helps you focus on the speaker's main points and supporting details and examples. It also helps you remember what you heard by using another of your senses (tactile) to record the information. Reviewing your notes also helps you remember what you heard.

Decide what is important.

Speakers use repetition to emphasize important points.
Watch for gestures, facial expressions, and body movements that emphasize points.
Listen for signal words or phrases.

-adapted from *The Confident Student*, Carol Kanar, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1991.

For more information, visit or call your nearest Rutgers Learning Center, or visit our website:<http://rlc.rutgers.edu>

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