



## Cultivating Self as Leader || Leadership

### Microcredentials - GWC

# How Good Are Your Listening Skills?

<https://www.mindtools.com/ai4ff5e/how-good-are-your-listening-skills>

#### Instructions

Evaluate each statement as you actually are, rather than as you think you should be. When you've finished, click "Calculate My Total" to add up your score, and use the table that follows to think about next steps.

14 Statements to Answer	Not at All	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. To be more productive, I respond to emails and instant messages while I'm speaking to people on the phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I repeat points back during a conversation to clarify my understanding of what the other person is saying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. When people speak to me about sensitive subjects, I make an effort to put them at ease.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I feel uncomfortable with silence during conversations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. As I listen, I compare the other person's viewpoint with my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14 Statements to Answer	Not at All	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
6. To get people to elaborate on their point, I ask open questions (ones that can't be answered with "yes" or "no").	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. When someone is speaking to me, I nod and say things like "OK" and "uh-huh" occasionally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I play "devil's advocate" to prompt responses from the other person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I catch myself asking leading questions to encourage the other person to agree with my viewpoint.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I interrupt people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. When people speak to me, I stay completely still so that I don't distract them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I try to read the other person's body language as I listen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. If the other person is struggling to explain something, I jump in with my own suggestions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. If I'm busy, I let others talk to me as long as they're quick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Calculate My Total: How to Improve Your Listening Skills

## **Preparing to Listen (Questions 1, 3, 14)**

Good preparation is essential for effective listening. Without it, it's hard to listen to people successfully.

Before you have an important conversation, remove anything that may distract you, so that you can focus and give the other person your full attention. Switch off your cell phone, turn off instant messaging and email alerts, put your work away, close your meeting room door, and do what you can to make sure that you won't be interrupted.

If you know that you won't be able to offer the other person your full attention – for example, if you're working on an urgent task – schedule a better time to speak. However, make sure that the other person knows that the conversation is important to you.

Also, do what you can to make the other person feel at ease. Use open [body language](#), and a friendly tone.

If someone indicates that they want to speak about a sensitive subject, and if this is appropriate, remind them that the conversation is confidential, and that they can be honest with you. (If you're a manager, there may be some things, however, that you cannot keep confidential, harassment, for instance, or negligent behavior. If your conversation is beginning to encroach on these, make this clear to the other person.)

## **Active Listening (Questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)**

When you [listen actively](#), you not only make a conscious effort to hear the other person's words, but, more importantly, you try to understand their whole message.

To do this, learn how to read people's [body language](#) and tone, so that you can identify "hidden" nonverbal messages.

Also, don't interrupt people, or allow yourself to become distracted by your own thoughts or opinions. Instead, focus completely on what the other person is saying. Nod or say "OK" occasionally to acknowledge that you're listening.

If you don't understand something, wait for the other person to finish what they're saying before you ask for clarification.

Above all, don't formulate a response until someone has communicated their whole message, and avoid any judgment or criticism until it's your turn to speak. If you argue or "play devil's advocate" while you listen, you may discourage them from opening up to you.

**Tip:**

It can be difficult not to formulate a response while the other person is talking. This is because we typically think much faster than other people can speak, so our brains are often "whirring away" while they are talking. You'll need to concentrate hard to stay focused on the person who's speaking, and this can take a lot of effort.

**Empathic Listening (Questions 2, 4, 6, 13)**

When you demonstrate [empathy](#), you recognize other people's emotions, and you do what you can to understand their perspectives. As such, it can really help to take active listening to the next level.

To [listen empathically](#), put yourself "in the other person's shoes," and try to see things from their point of view. Then, summarize what they say, in your own words, to show that you understand their perspective.

Also, ask open [questions](#) to help them to articulate themselves fully, and avoid using leading questions that "put words in their mouth." This gives them the opportunity to add further detail, and to talk about their feelings.

Importantly, don't fear moments of silence when you listen. Instead, embrace pauses as a way to give them time to finish his point, and to allow them to reflect on what they have said.

**Key Points**

When you have good listening skills, you not only "hear" what's being said, you listen to the whole message as well. Because of this, you enable others to express themselves fully. When you need to listen, make sure that you're prepared, and that things in your environment will not distract you. Also, do what you can to put people at ease. Next, use active listening techniques so that you give people your full attention, and look out for the nonverbal elements of their message.

Finally, take your listening skills to the next level with empathic listening. When appropriate, embrace silence and make an effort to see things from other people's perspectives.

**Note:**

This assessment has not been validated and is intended for illustrative purposes only. It is just one of many Mind Tool quizzes that can help you to evaluate your abilities in a wide range of important career skills.

If you want to reproduce this quiz, you can purchase downloadable copies in our [Store](#).

# Leadership Development Plan

## Professional Goals

Describe your primary professional goals you are focused on achieving over the next five years.

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## Core Leadership Qualities

List the leadership traits, attributes, and abilities you feel you need to develop in order to be a better leader.

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## Personal Leadership SWOT

List your personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as they pertain to developing leadership skills.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

## Leadership Goals

Identify 4-5 goals to you plan to work towards over the next five years.

Leadership Goal	Strategy	Success Measure	Target Date

## **Supporting the Growth and Development of Others**

List the 1-2 things you will do over the next six months to learn about or better understand your team members' professional growth interests and needs?

List existing resources (e.g., books, trainings, conferences, classes, etc.) that you can use to support your team members' growth and development? What additional resources do you think you might need?

List 2-3 practices that you'll use over the next year to support your team members' professional growth in an ongoing and intentional manner.



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### Put Down the Phone Activity

Today, most of us have access to the world by the simple touch of a screen: our smartphones. We communicate with family, friends, strangers by text, social media, email, and sometimes by calling. It is incredible sometimes to think how "connected" we are. Here are some statistics for cell phone usages in the U.S.: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/> (Links to an external site.)

#### **There is also a digital divide**

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/social-media-use-continues-to-rise-in-developing-countries-but-plateaus-across-developed-ones/#table>

A question that scholars in communication ask: Does being "connected" improve or inhibit our communication? Just as there are many forms of communication, there are many complex answers to that question. A lot of the debate occurs within the study of Interpersonal Communication. Does smartphone usage restrict the amount of interpersonal communication between two people? Does it improve the effectiveness of the communication? How does technology affect our relationships?

For the next 5 days, you are asked to conduct a non-scientific experiment; in fact, this should be classified as an *experience* rather than an *experiment*. Each day of the week, choose a time when you are present with one or more people in a casual setting (meal time, 'water cooler' conversations at work, meeting up with a friend, etc.). During that time, resist the urge to use your phone. No texting, no checking messages, no email. Put the phone away. Turn it off or put it in another room. Focus your attention on talking and listening to the person or people around you. Each time you do this, try to lengthen the time you are able to meet the challenge.

**1. Record your experience in the chart provided (or create your own). Submit through CANVAS**

**2. Write a one –two page response on your “experiment/experience.” Submit online through Assignments.**

You can start by answering these questions but you may want to add more. How did giving your full attention to the person(s) you were with change how you communicated? Did it affect your

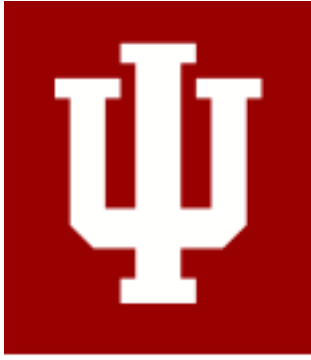


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listening? What did you retain? Were you comfortable or uncomfortable? How did the person(s) you were with react? What surprised you, if anything?

*Record your experience in the chart provided*

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>Time of day</i>							
<i>Length of time</i>							
<i>Activity or people you were with</i>							
<i>Observations</i>							



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## Shifting Perspectives (PILLOW METHOD)

Adler, R. B. & Proctor II, R. F. (2015), Chapter 8 Listening worksheet SW-202

### LEARNING OBEJCTIVES

- Enhance your cognitive complexity by applying the ‘pillow method’ in a significant disagreement.
- Explain how your expanded view of this situation might affect your communication with the other(s) involved.

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### PART I:

1. Select one disagreement of other issue that is now affecting an interpersonal relationship. This might be in an issues such as “I think our children should go to public school; my spouse wants them to go to private school” or a more public disagreement such as “I think voting for third party helps democracy in our country; my friend thinks it undermines democracy by drawing votes away from two major parties.”
2. In the space below, record enough background information for an outsider to understand your stance on the issue. Who is involved? How long has the disagreement been going on? What are the basic issues involved?

Brief Background information & state your position:

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**PART II: Group up in parties of 5. The group will choose one situation, then the leader will state their position #1 while each of the remaining four members will choose a position below to provide alternative perspectives.**

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Reference:

Adler, R. B. & Proctor II, R. F. (2015). *Looking out looking in*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition. Cengage Learning.



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Position 1: “I’m right, and you’re wrong.” Explain how you are right and the other person is wrong.

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Position 2: “You’re right, and I’m wrong.” Explain how the other person’s position is correct, or at least understandable.

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Position 3: “We’re both right, and we’re both wrong.” Show that there are both correct (or understandable) and mistaken (or unreasonable) parts of both positions.

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Position 4: “The issue may be less important than it seems; some other things may be more important.” Describe at least two ways in which the elements developed in positions 1-3 might affect your relationship. Describe at least one way in which the issue might be seen as less

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important than it was originally and describe at least one way in which the issue might be seen as more important than it was originally.

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Position #5: There is truth in all positions.

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