

# Listening Skills

**Unit.** Effective Communication

**Problem Area.** Develop Communication Skills

**Lesson.** Listening Skills

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Describe the importance of good listening skills in oral communications.**
- 2 Describe the techniques for effective listening.**
- 3 Describe the factors that contribute to poor listening.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Badasch, S., and Chesebro, D. (2004). *Introduction to Health Occupations*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gerdin, J. (2003). *Health Careers Today*, 3rd ed. St. Louis: Mosby.

Simmers, L. (1998). *Diversified Health Occupations*, 4th ed. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Publishers.

Sorrentino, S. (2004). *Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants*, 6th ed. St. Louis: Mosby.



## ■ List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials
- ✓ Two or three songs for listening practice

## ■ Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ active listening
- ▶ bias
- ▶ clarifying
- ▶ direct questioning
- ▶ focusing
- ▶ hearing
- ▶ open-ended questioning
- ▶ paraphrasing
- ▶ silence

## ■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

*How well do you think you listen? Do you think there are distractions that prevent you from really listening? Let's do a practice round to see how well you listen. I am going to read a set of directions to you, and I will read each one only once. We'll begin by numbering 1 through 9 on your paper.*

1. Write yes, no matter what letter your last name starts with.
2. Of the hammer and the nail, write the shorter.
3. Write no even if you think cement is heavier than feathers.
4. Write the numbers 2, 7, 9, 5, and 8 and circle the largest.
5. If you circled 7, make a square; if not, make a cross.
6. If screwdrivers screw screws, complete this sentence: Hammers pound \_\_\_\_\_.
7. If 3 times 2 equals 8, make a circle; if not, make two dots.
8. Give the wrong answer to this question: Does wood come from trees?
9. If Washington was not the first President of the United States, write the shorter of the words red or green; if he was, sign your name.

Take class time to go over the responses expected from those students who profess to be good listeners. Predict how they may have been answered by those who were not using good listening skills.

# SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Describe the importance of good listening skills in oral communications.

**Anticipated Problem:** Why are good listening skills important in oral communications?

- I. Listening is only one part of communication, but it is the basis for successful communication.
  - A. If a person does not listen closely to the communicator, part of the message may be lost.
  - B. The listener is responsible for making the effort to understand the message.
  - C. Listening and hearing are not the same.
    1. **Hearing** is the physical process of detecting sound, but it is only the first step of listening.
    2. Listening is a conscious mental effort to understand what one is hearing. In general, a person “hears” 70% of a message, but actually remembers only about 50%.
    3. Listening consumes about 45% of the time spent communicating.
    4. An effective listener will receive, attend, evaluate, and recall the message.
    5. **Active listening** is an active process, not a passive one.
    6. Good listeners often use various techniques to make sure they understand the message.
      - a. **Paraphrasing** involves restating what has been said.
      - b. **Direct questioning** involves asking “yes” or “no” questions.
      - c. **Open-ended questioning** involves asking questions that require more than a yes/no answer.
      - d. **Clarifying** involves asking the speaker to restate or repeat the message.
      - e. **Focusing** involves drawing a rambling or wandering speaker back to the main issue.
      - f. **Silence** involves saying nothing, which can show care and respect for the speaker and allow the listener to gather his or her thoughts. This may be a good listening tool during sad talks.

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could refer to Chapter 2 in *Health Careers Today* or Chapter 6 in *Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants*. Use VM–A and VM–B to illustrate active listening guidelines and techniques good listeners use.

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**Objective 2:** Describe the techniques for effective listening.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are some techniques for effective listening?

- II. Improving listening skills begins with the desire to do so. There are several techniques that can improve listening skills:
  - A. Being prepared for listening
    - 1. Removing all distractions
  - B. Listening with the intent to understand
    - 1. Not worrying about how to respond
    - 2. Paying attention to nonverbal cues
  - C. Controlling emotions, which helps to prevent confusion
    - 1. Having patience
    - 2. Avoiding an argument
  - D. Organizing the information, if possible, as it is being heard
    - 1. Recognizing common patterns of organizing information, like “first,” “next,” and “then”

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could use Chapter 2 in *Health Careers Today* or Chapter 6 in *Mosby's Textbook for Nursing Assistants*.

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**Objective 3:** Describe the factors that contribute to poor listening.

**Anticipated Problem:** What factors can lead to poor listening?

- III. Several factors can lead to poor listening:
  - A. Tuning out occurs when a person hears someone speaking, but he or she is not listening to the speaker.
    - 1. This can occur when the person who is supposed to be listening is not interested in what the speaker is talking about.
    - 2. This can be done intentionally and unintentionally.
  - B. Prejudice or **bias** can result in poor listening.
    - 1. If a person does not like what a speaker is saying, it is natural to have difficulty listening.

2. Try to avoid jumping to conclusions.
  3. Bias is showing partiality to one side or the other, and this makes listening to an opposing perspective difficult.
- C. Difficulty understanding a speaker's language or difficulty hearing can cause poor listening.
1. Understanding a speaker's language or dialect is imperative to effectively listening to a verbal message.
  2. If a language barrier exists, pay attention to body language.
  3. If a language barrier persists, attempt to learn common phrases that may be needed in the performance of one's job.
- D. Information overload can lead to poor listening.
1. Too much information can cause the mind to wander.
  2. Information that is too complicated may make a listener tune out.

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. As an example, students could use Chapter 2 in *Health Careers Today* or Chapter 5 in *Introduction to Health Occupations*. Use LS-A to practice active listening.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Matching**

1. c
2. e
3. f
4. b
5. d
6. a

## Part Two: Short Answer

1. Hearing is only a physical process, but active listening is a mental process that requires the listener to be engaged in listening.
2. bias
3. Use nonverbal communication or try to learn some simple phrases that apply to your job.

# Listening Skills

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct statement.

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| a. paraphrasing       | d. clarifying             |
| b. focusing           | e. open-ended questioning |
| c. direct questioning | f. silence                |

- \_\_\_\_ 1. “Do you want to go to the dining room?”
- \_\_\_\_ 2. “Can you tell me what happened when you felt bad?”
- \_\_\_\_ 3. A patient relays a story and you say nothing as he talks.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. “Mr. Rambler, that picture of your family is very special, but could you tell me again about your abdominal pain?”
- \_\_\_\_ 5. “Could you repeat that last part, Mrs. Walker? I don’t think I heard part of it.”
- \_\_\_\_ 6. “I hear you saying that you’re ready to go home today.”

## ► Part Two: Short Answer

**Instructions:** Complete the following.

1. What is the difference between hearing and active listening?
2. Tuning a speaker out can happen if you have a \_\_\_\_\_, or an opposing belief that you are partial to.
3. What is one thing you can do to better communicate if there is a language barrier?



# Listening to a Health Career Presentation

## Overview

Students will listen to a guest speaker on a career in health care and write a summary that contains desired information accordingly:

- ◆ *Identifying Duties:* Identify career duties; identify career maintenance requirements.
- ◆ *Addressing Employability Skills and Labor Market Information:* Identify needed employability skills; identify salary range or hourly wage; address projected need and current demand.
- ◆ *Documenting Education Requirements:* List number of years of training or undergraduate education required; identify post-graduate work, degree earned, and apprenticeships or residencies; name training schools in or near the local area; identify state/national testing requirements.

## Procedures

1. In order to listen effectively in formal and informal situations, students should experience sufficient opportunities to develop the following skills:
  - ◆ Appraise the situation and assume the appropriate listening mode.
  - ◆ Separate main ideas, supporting facts, and details while listening.
  - ◆ Critique the relationship between a speaker's verbal communication skills (e.g., word choice, pitch, feelings, tone, voice) and nonverbal messages (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, posture, spatial proximity).
  - ◆ Determine meaning from speaker's denotations and connotations.
  - ◆ Formulate probing idea-generating questions to clarify meaning.

The Health Science Technology student needs to understand various career options and the preparation required for them. Health care is team-oriented; and practicing team membership skills such as cooperation, leadership, and listening assure the client of quality care. A health care worker can utilize listening skills to measure and report indicators of a client's health status.

2. Have Health Science Technology students review and discuss the assessment tool and how the rubric will be used to evaluate their work.
3. The teacher will create opportunities to practice listening to a career presentation and writing a follow-up career summary. The summary should contain, at a minimum, a list of



the duties of the career being addressed, a description of the employability skills needed to succeed in this career, the prerequisites and educational requirements of the career, career maintenance requirements, where training can be obtained, state and national testing requirements, and the projected need or demand for the job as well as the salary range offered (Labor Market Information).

4. The Health Science Technology student will be familiar with active listening techniques.
5. Students will listen to a guest speaker on a particular health career.
6. Students will ask questions to assist in obtaining information needed for writing a career summary.
7. Evaluate each student's performance using the rubric. Add each student's scores to determine the performance level.

### **Time Requirements**

1–2 class periods

### **Resources**

- ◆ Health Care Presentation Rubric

# Health Career Presentation

- ◆ Exceeds standard (11–12 total points)
- ◆ Meets standard (8–10 total points)
- ◆ Approaches standard (5–7 total points)
- ◆ Begins standard or absent (0–4 points)

|              | Duties                                                                                                                                                                            | Employability Skills/LMI                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Education                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies four or five duties of the career.</li> <li>• Identifies three requirements to maintain the career.</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies four or five employability skills needed for the career.</li> <li>• Identifies salary range or hourly wage.</li> <li>• Addresses projected need and current demand.</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists the number of years of technical training or undergraduate work required.</li> <li>• Identifies the number of years of post-graduate work, including the degree earned and apprenticeships or residencies required.</li> <li>• Lists four or more schools where training can be obtained.</li> <li>• Identifies whether national/state testing is required to practice.</li> </ul> |
| 3            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies three duties of the career.</li> <li>• Identifies two requirements to maintain the career.</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies three employability skills needed for the career.</li> <li>• Identifies salary range or hourly wage.</li> <li>• Somewhat addresses projected need and current demand.</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists the number of years of technical training or undergraduate work required.</li> <li>• Identifies the number of years of post-graduate work, including the degree earned.</li> <li>• Lists three schools where training can be obtained.</li> <li>• Identifies whether national/state testing is required to practice.</li> </ul>                                                    |
| 2            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies one or two duties of the career.</li> <li>• Fully identifies one requirement to maintain the career.</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies one or two employability skills needed for the career.</li> <li>• Identifies salary range or hourly wage.</li> <li>• Addresses projected need or current demand.</li> </ul>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists the number of years of technical training or undergraduate work required.</li> <li>• Identifies the number of years of post-graduate work.</li> <li>• Lists two schools where training can be obtained.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies duties of the career wrongly or not at all.</li> <li>• Somewhat identifies one requirement to maintain the career.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies employability skills needed for the career wrongly or not at all.</li> <li>• Identifies salary range or hourly wage wrongly or not at all.</li> <li>• Does not address either projected need or current demand.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists the number of years of technical training or college required.</li> <li>• Lists one school where training can be obtained.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Score</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

# ACTIVE LISTENING GUIDELINES

- ◆ Stop all other activities.
- ◆ Look at the person speaking for verbal and nonverbal messages.
- ◆ Focus attention on what is being said.
- ◆ Confirm understanding with paraphrasing, direct questioning, open-ended questioning, clarifying, focusing, or silence.
- ◆ Give your opinion after the other party is finished speaking.

*From: Gerdin, page 26, with some additions from Sorrentino, page 92.*



# WAYS TO CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING

- ◆ **Paraphrasing:** restating the person’s message in your own words or perhaps fewer words.
- ◆ **Direct Questioning:** focusing on certain information to find out what you need to know; answered with “yes” or “no.”
- ◆ **Open-Ended Questioning:** Lead or invite a person to share more; unable to answer this type of question with a simple “yes” or “no.”
- ◆ **Clarifying:** asking for the speaker to repeat or restate, or verbalizing to the speaker that you do not understand.
- ◆ **Focusing:** used when a person is rambling or wandering in thought to bring them back to the main issue. “Let’s talk some more about....”
- ◆ **Silence:** shows caring and respect to the communicator; may be used during sad times, or to give yourself time to organize your thoughts.

*From: Sorrentino, page 92.*



# Practicing Effective Listening Techniques

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to allow students to practice listening skills and to experience the difference between active listening and just “hearing.”

## Objectives

1. Analyze the differences between active listening and ineffective listening.
2. Practice active listening techniques.

## Materials

- ◆ paper
- ◆ writing utensil
- ◆ music on CD or computer
- ◆ a music player that the entire class can hear well

## Procedure

1. Pick two or three songs to present to the class. Explain that you will be listening to some music today to discuss later. Don't point out that they should practice active listening at this time.
2. Play a song with words that are clearly distinguishable, but to which students most likely do not know the words. Story songs are best for this exercise, and a slower song is best for the first round of this listening game. As an example, use “Where Have You Been?” by Kathy Mattea.
3. Let the song play in its entirety.
4. Ask students questions about the story in the song. Questions might revolve around main characters, what happened to them, cities or streets mentioned, or any repetitive phrases in the song. For the Kathy Mattea song, questions might include the following:
  - a. Who is the main character(s) in this song?
  - b. Was the singer a woman or a man?
  - c. What is the setting for the song?
  - d. What is the eventual ending of the story?

- e. What can you infer about the health of the two characters?
  - f. What can you infer about the ages of the two characters?
5. Repeat the song after telling students that they are to be practicing active listening when the song is playing.
  6. Ask the same type of questions, and compare responses of attempt #1 to attempt #2.
  7. This activity can be repeated by allowing the class to talk quietly to a classmate while a second song is played. Ask questions about the song, and then play the song again after telling students to practice active listening. Ask questions again, and compare responses of attempt #1 with attempt #2.