



REPRODUCIBLE TRAINING LIBRARY

Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Effective Listening Skills

PREVIEW



Instructor Guide

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Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- *Brainstorming sessions with target audience*
- *Library research*
- *Online research*
- *Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)*
- *Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)*
- *Interviews with trainers*

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- *Learning objectives provide effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training*
- *Meaningful connections between the topic and students' past, present, and future*
- *Appropriate organization of essential ideas helps students to focus on what they need to know in order to learn*
- *Modeling techniques demonstrate useful behaviors and problem-solving skills*
- *Active application, the cornerstone to learning, helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation*
- *Consistent instructions and design help students learn and retain new information*
- *Accelerated learning techniques create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles*

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course to appeal to all learning styles and ensure that the ideas and information will be retained.

Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy (cont.)

Customizing Your Program

There are two ways you can customize this program: 1) Customize the content and 2) Customize the format.

Customizing the content is easy. The Instructor Guide and Participant Guide are created in Word, so you can simply modify the content just as you would any Word document. Some common reasons for customizing content include:

- *Changing examples to fit your industry or work environment*
- *Modifying content to match work rules and procedures*
- *Adding, deleting or rearranging content to meet training time constraints*

The other way to customize the program is to change the formatting. Typically, organizations will do this to add their corporate logo and/or colors, or it may just be an issue of personal preference. Again, treat the Instructor Guide and/or Participant Guide as you would any Word document. The styles used in this document are labeled HRDQ in the Quick Styles tab. For additional help using Word, consult the Microsoft website.

Preparing for the Training

As you know, preparation is the key to conducting an effective training. Here are some issues to consider:

Logistics

- *Advertise the training with enough advance notice that participants can block it out on their calendars. Consider contacting potential participants' managers to encourage their attendance.*
- *Send a confirmation notice before the training reminding participants of the date, time and location.*
- *Room setup: Ideally, use round tables to facilitate partner and small group interaction.*

Equipment and Supplies

In order for the training to go smoothly, have these supplies and equipment on hand:

- *Name tags*
- *Water for yourself and the participants*
- *Flip chart and markers, tape*
- *Beverages and snacks (optional)*
- *Laptop with projector (for the PowerPoint)*
- *Timer or watch*
- *Blank paper and pens, sticky notes*
- *Flip chart paper*

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

Contents

Module One: The Importance of Listening	1
<i>Course Objectives.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Why Listen?</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Listening Self-Assessment.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Effective and Ineffective Listeners.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Barriers to Listening</i>	<i>6</i>
Module Two: Steps to Active Listening	7
<i>Ready</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Receive.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Review.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Respond</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Remember</i>	<i>12</i>
Module Three: Skills to Improve Understanding	13
<i>Questioning Techniques.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Uncover Hidden Messages</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Encouraging the Other Person to Talk</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Listening in Emotional Situations.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Make It Easy for Others to Listen to You.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Listening in a Group or Audience</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Increase Information Flow to Enhance Productivity and Teamwork.....</i>	<i>20</i>
Appendix	21
<i>Action Plan.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Course Review.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Suggested Resource List.....</i>	<i>25</i>

Module One



The Importance of Listening

Course Objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Describe the importance of listening
- ◇ Identify barriers to listening well
- ◇ Implement the steps of active listening
- ◇ Uncover hidden messages
- ◇ Listen in emotional situations
- ◇ Increase information flow to enhance productivity and teamwork

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Introduce yourself and provide a brief background if participants don't know you. Go over logistics (schedule, breaks, restrooms, etc.) and any ground rules for the day. Typical ground rules include no electronics in use, show respect for every participant, participate fully, no dominating or interrupting, etc.

Review the course objectives with participants.



Effective Listening Skills

Course Objectives

- Describe the importance of listening
- Identify barriers to listening well
- Implement the steps of active listening
- Uncover hidden messages
- Listen in emotional situations
- Increase information flow to enhance productivity and teamwork

Listening Self-Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and circle the number that best reflects the frequency with which you demonstrate each listening skill.

1=Seldom 2=Sometimes 3=Frequently

1. I listen for feelings and attitudes, as well as for facts.	1	2	3
2. I listen for unspoken messages by reading body language and/or tone of voice.	1	2	3
3. I avoid being distracted, mentally and physically.	1	2	3
4. I avoid making snap judgments and jumping to conclusions.	1	2	3
5. I avoid thinking of my response while the other person is speaking.	1	2	3
6. I focus on the content more than the delivery style.	1	2	3
7. I paraphrase to confirm understanding.	1	2	3
8. I avoid getting sucked into the other person's emotions.	1	2	3
9. I show the speaker I'm listening with appropriate words and responses.	1	2	3
10. I listen more than I talk.	1	2	3

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Activity: Self-assessment. Tell participants to read each statement and circle the number that best reflects the frequency with which they demonstrate each listening skill. Allow several minutes. Debrief by encouraging participants to work on improving the areas where they rated themselves a 1 or a 2.

Barriers to Listening

Bad habits

- ◇ Convincing yourself that the topic is boring before you even begin listening
- ◇ Focusing on the appearance and/or delivery of the speaker
- ◇ Listening only to the facts/words and not the overall message
- ◇ Allowing emotionally charged words to impact your ability to listen
- ◇ Focusing on what you want to say more than what is being said

Style differences

- ◇ What's your style?

- ◇ What's your manager's style?

Activity

Instructions: With a partner, discuss your most recent challenge or frustration at work.

"The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."

*Henry David Thoreau,
American author and poet*



Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Review the bad habits that may affect any person.

Style differences may affect how people listen (or not) to each other.

For example, some people are "just the facts" types and will drift if the conversation isn't strictly focused, while others are more concerned with feelings and need to know how the other person is feeling before he or she can "hear" the message.

Some people are natural interrupters because they are engaged in the conversation, while others listen patiently to the entire message from the other person before responding.

Some people make and need lots of eye contact while others don't.

All these differences, and more, can cause friction between the speaker and listener.

Activity: List your typical listening style. Do you make lots or little eye contact? Interrupt or wait? Want facts or feelings? Next, list your manager's style. If there is a difference, you may need to work extra hard to listen effectively to each other.

Activity: Have participants work in pairs. Decide who will go first and have the speakers talk about their most recent challenge or frustration at work while the listener uses all the bad habits possible. Switch roles, then debrief by asking participants how they felt when the listener used bad habits.

Ready

“Tune in” like a radio receiver.

Be available: Take the initiative to reach out to those around you and invite a discussion.

Overview of the Five Steps



- Ready
- Respond
- Review
- Remember

Ready

Be available!

- Prepare physically
- Prepare mentally



Trainer Notes

10 minutes

First, make yourself available to listen. You may be the best listener in the world, but if you’re always “too busy,” or “just need another minute,” others will quit trying to talk meaningfully to you.

Next, prepare physically and mentally. Both are equally important. Even if you think you can listen well while multi-tasking, the speaker will not feel listened to, and in fact, you’re not giving the speaker your full attention.

Activity: Have participants work in pairs. Tell them to listen just as they normally would in a meeting with another person. The speakers will begin by talking about something positive that has happened to them in the last six months. The listeners will not interact with their partners, but will raise their hands every time they have a distracting thought—whether it’s a question they want to ask, an experience they want to share, or some unrelated thought. Stop after two minutes, then switch roles. Debrief by asking participants how often they were mentally distracted, and what they can do to minimize those distractions.

Prepare physically

- ◇ *Minimize physical/environment distractions (noise, talkative colleagues, etc.). Find a quiet place, if possible.*
- ◇ *Turn off your phone and any other distracting devices.*
- ◇ *Stop all non-relevant activities.*
- ◇ *Have an open and inviting posture.*

Prepare mentally

- ◇ *Give the speaker 100% of your attention.*
- ◇ *Put aside distracting thoughts.*
- ◇ *Review what you already know about the topic.*
- ◇ *Remember, your goal is to learn and understand what the speaker has to say, not the other way around.*

Much of our mental distraction stems from the fact that we can listen and process information much faster than we can speak. So there is “extra time” in the listener’s mind while the speaker is talking, and that can lead to wandering thoughts. You will probably never prevent distracting thoughts from occurring, but you can recognize when they do and quickly refocus on the speaker. It may also help to jot down notes of the speaker’s main points while he or she is talking.

Remember

The goal is to move what you hear from short-term to long-term memory.

Make the message memorable

- ◇ Focus.
- ◇ Use all your senses.
- ◇ Paint a picture.
- ◇ Say it back.
- ◇ Jot it down.
- ◇ Attach a feeling.
- ◇ Use humor.

Create associations

- ◇ Place items on top of each other.
- ◇ Crash or merge items together.
- ◇ Wrap items around each other.
- ◇ Have them dancing together.
- ◇ Link items using color, shape or feeling.

Activity: Practice remembering

Activity: Practice remembering. Have participants work in pairs. One person will talk about his or her favorite vacation, sharing specific details. The listener will use the tips provided to help remember the information. Switch roles and repeat. Then, have them switch partners and take turns talking about the other person's favorite activity. Switch roles and repeat. Finally, ask participants to get back with their original partners and repeat back as much as they can remember about that original conversation.



Trainer Notes

10 minutes

A key aspect of listening that is often ignored is remembering what you heard. The key to remembering is to move the information from your short-term to your long-term memory.

If the speaker hasn't made the message memorable, you still can, using these tips.

Focus: Multitasking is the enemy of memory. Instead, give your complete attention to the conversation—this gives your brain time to move the information to long-term memory.

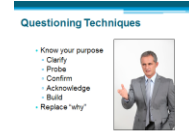
Use all your senses (or as many as possible). Example: To remember someone's name, look the person in the eye (sight), repeat his or her name (sound) and offer a handshake (touch).

Paint a picture: Give your image three dimensions and/or movement to make it even more vivid. Or, exaggerate the size of the important parts of the image/message. Use symbols: (stop sign, pointing finger, traffic light, etc).

Attach a feeling: Think of the feeling you get when thinking of your grandma's home-baked cookies. Or the feeling you had when thinking of winning an important contest in high school. If you can attach a feeling with the information you want to remember, you are more likely to remember it.

Create associations: Link items you want to remember in a variety of ways.

Questioning Techniques



Know your purpose

- ◇ Clarify
 - “I’m confused about...” or “Can you explain ...?”
- ◇ Probe
 - “Tell me more about...”
- ◇ Confirm
 - “So, from what you’ve said, I’m assuming...”
- ◇ Acknowledge
 - “I sense you’re feeling overwhelmed by...”
- ◇ Build
 - “That’s a good point. What else?”

Replace “why”

- ◇ Avoid closed-ended and “why” or “why not” questions
- ◇ Ask, “How...?” or “Is there a reason...?”

Practice: Asking different types of questions

Question types: clarify, probe, confirm, acknowledge, build. The person who is NOT speaking (the listener) then needs to form a question of that type related to the current conversation. Make sure the facilitator stops the conversation at times that both people have an opportunity to form a question. Switch roles so the facilitator has a chance to practice forming questions as well.

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Introduction to this module: We’ve covered the basic steps of active listening. However, it can be enhanced by improving questioning skills, becoming better/more accurate at reading body language, and becoming a better listener in emotional situations.

Although you need to ask questions to clarify and prevent misunderstandings, it’s important to let the speaker direct the flow of the conversation.

Otherwise, you may steer the conversation in a different direction and the other person might never get a chance to say what is really on his or her mind. So, know your purpose before asking questions.

When you ask “why?” or “why not?” it can make the other person feel defensive, even if you didn’t mean it that way. Instead, ask, “How...?” or “Is there a reason...?” You have a greater chance to continue an open dialogue that way.

Activity: Divide participants into groups of three. One person will serve as the facilitator. Tell the other two people to have a conversation about their favorite childhood memories (or choose another topic). Tell the facilitator to periodically (and pretty frequently) stop the conversation and call out one of the question types.

Listening in Emotional Situations

Recognize your hot buttons

- ◇ When have you spoken or acted impulsively and regretted it afterward?
- ◇ What triggered your response? Was it something someone said or did?
- ◇ Is there a pattern?
- ◇ Do your friends, family or co-workers know what “sets you off”? Can they tell you what makes you irritated or difficult?

Recognize Your Hot Buttons

- When have you acted impulsively?
- What sets your off?
- Is there a pattern?



Avoid these behaviors that escalate emotions

- ◇ Interrupting
- ◇ Arguing
- ◇ Telling the other person to calm down
- ◇ Giving advice
- ◇ Faking understanding
- ◇ Belittling, condescending or minimizing
- ◇ Jumping to conclusions
- ◇ Touching

Behaviors That Escalate Emotions

- Interrupting
- Arguing
- Saying “calm down”
- Giving advice
- Faking understanding
- Belittling
- Jumping to conclusions
- Touching



De-escalate emotions

- ◇ Respect the emotional person’s perceptions as real to him or her.
 - “If it were me, I might be feeling...”
- ◇ Set clear boundaries while allowing the other person to talk.
 - “I’m here to listen, but I can’t do that until you slow down and stop swearing.”
- ◇ Use nonthreatening words and an even-tempered tone of voice.
- ◇ Keep responses short.

How to De-Escalate Emotions

- Respect perceptions as real
- Set clear boundaries
- Use non-threatening words
- Keep responses short



Activity: Handling negative emotions. Allow several minutes for participants to write a description of an encounter they had with an upset person. After everyone has completed their descriptions, have them trade with a partner. They will then take turns practicing the skill of de-escalating emotions using the situations their partners gave them. Circulate around the room as they practice, offering feedback.

Trainer Notes

20 minutes

Active listening is hard work in any situation; however, when emotions are running high, it becomes even more difficult. We get defensive and want to prove we’re right and the other person is wrong. We become closed-minded and quit listening.

So, the first step to listening in emotional situations is to get a handle on your own emotions. You can do that by recognizing your hot buttons. Answer the questions listed. Be as specific as you can. Once you identify what triggers an emotional response in you, you can be better prepared to handle it when it occurs. Usually, that means taking a mental time-out—take a moment to breathe, slow down and delay your response.

Another thing you want to do is to avoid behaviors that escalate emotions. Review the list of behaviors to avoid. Although we know better, it can be extremely difficult to refrain from interrupting, arguing back and especially from telling the other person to calm down.

De-escalate emotions:

Respect the angry person’s perceptions as real to him or her. Tell people what you notice, and ask for confirmation of what you’re sensing. It’s especially effective to say, “If it were me, I might be feeling ...” rather than saying, “You must be feeling...”

Course Review

1. List three benefits of listening.

2. The best way to take notes is to write down as much as possible.

- a. True
- b. False

3. Which of the following is NOT a bad listening habit?

- a. Suspending judgment about the topic
- b. Focusing on what you want to say next
- c. Focusing on the delivery style of the speaker
- d. Listening only to the facts and not to the overall message

4. List the five steps of effective listening.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

5. As long as you are in a quiet spot, you are ready to listen.

- a. True
- b. False

6. Which of the following is NOT a questioning technique?

- a. Clarify
- b. Probe
- c. Dispute
- d. Acknowledge

Trainer Notes

1. Build relationships, increase productivity, solve problems, avoid unnecessary conflict, improve ability to influence, persuade, or negotiate.

2. b. False

3. a.

4. Ready, Receive, Review, Respond, Remember

5. b. False

6. c.

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