

LISTENING TO WHAT YOU HEAR



**COMPETENCY
CATEGORY:** Basic Skills

**CATEGORY
NUMBER:** D.21

COMPETENCY: Comprehend verbal communications.

OBJECTIVE: Upon completion of this module, students will be able to comprehend verbal communication skills.



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INTRODUCTION

- Ask the students to listen as you read the following weather forecast:

“The forecast for greater West Brownsville calls for mostly clear skies today becoming partly cloudy this evening and tomorrow with a 40% chance of scattered showers tonight, 60% chance tomorrow. Barometric pressure is 29.9 and falling. Winds are out of the west-southwest at 15 miles an hour gusting to 21 miles an hour. The high temperature today will be 74, the low tonight, 54 with tomorrow’s high reaching to 81.”

- Ask the students the following questions.
 1. For what area is the weather forecast?
 2. When will the skies become partly cloudy?
 3. What is the chance of rain for tomorrow?
 4. What is the wind speed when they are not gusting?
 5. How cool will it get overnight?
 6. How warm will it be tomorrow?

Note to Specialist: Place answers on writing board.

- After the students have attempted the answers (or luckily remembered all of the information), ask them how easy it was to recall something they just heard.

- Lead the class in discussing why we can physically hear something, but not really be listening.

- Ask students for other examples of circumstances when things spoken seem to “go in one ear and out the other.”

- Review the module objective.

Administer Pre-Assessment

OUTLINE

A. Elements of Communication

1. Sender – person(s) giving a message to another person or group
2. Message – thought or concept being communicated
3. Receiver – person or group to whom the message is sent
4. Feedback – a response from the receiver that lets the sender know if the message has been understood

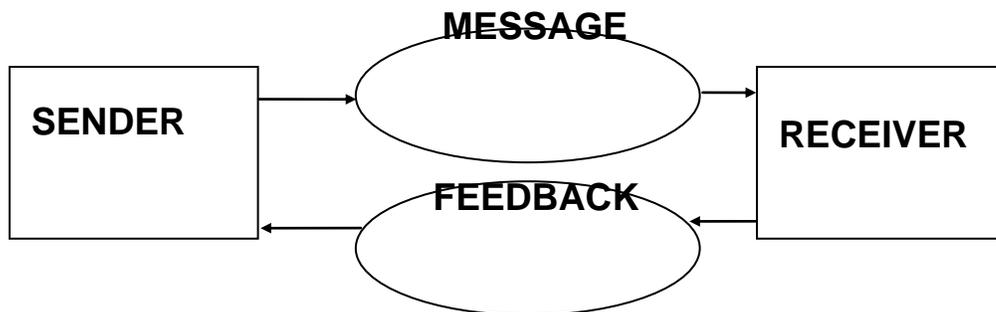
Example:

Naida told Kenda, “Larry asked me to the dance. I was hoping he would ask me. Then Gerald asked me and I want to go with him, too. I don’t know what to do.”

Kenda smiled and said warmly, “You’re having a hard time deciding who to go to the dance with.”

In the above dialogue, Naida is the **sender**. Kenda is the **receiver**. The **message** is, “Larry asked me to the dance. I was hoping he would ask me. Then Gerald asked me and I want to go with him, too. I don’t know what to do.” Finally, the **feedback** is, “you’re having a hard time deciding who to go to the dance with.”

Note to Specialist: Have the students work in pairs to create a short dialogue similar to the example. As each pair reads their dialogue, instruct the other class members to identify the sender, receiver, message, and feedback. Pay close attention to the feedback, making certain it reflects the sender’s message.



Note to Specialist: Draw the communication cycle on the writing board. Use the dialogues the students created in part A as examples of the communication cycle. As you or a student reads the dialogue, point to the element of the communication cycle that is being read. Emphasize how the communication follows the cycle: sender → message → receiver → feedback.

B. The communication cycle

1. The sender delivers a message to the receiver.
2. The receiver responds by giving feedback to the sender.
3. The feedback lets the sender know how well the receiver has understood the message.

C. Listening for important points

1. Identify the purpose of the communication.
2. If listeners know the purpose of the message, they can focus attention on facts or details that accomplish the purpose.

Example:

If a supervisor was explaining how a new piece of machinery works, an employee would be attentive to hear steps, procedures and responses of the machine's operation.

COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-1

“INDUSTRIAL FEEDBACK”

3. Identify strategies selected to present the message.
4. Knowing the strategy or organizational pattern of the message will help the listener identify important points:
 - a. Inference – a listener will be attentive for statements that lead to a conclusion.

Example:

If an employer says, “We may have a high percentage of defects now, but after these modifications are made, that will be a thing of the past.” A listening employee will understand that the employer is saying the modifications will correct the defects problem.

- b. Generalizations – a listener will apply an example of a situation to all cases of that situation.

Example:

If a sports enthusiast says, “My grandfather and great grandfather exercised every day and lived to be over 100,” a listener understands the speaker is saying that exercise will result in a long life.

- c. Cause and effect – connecting actions and their results

Example:

If a car salesman says, “This car has a very special feature when you press the gas pedal to the floor,” the buyer will be listening for a specific result of holding the pedal to the floor.

- d. Compare and contrast – communicating similarities and differences

Example:

Suppose a tour guide at a zoo was informing the group about the similarities and differences of lions and leopards. If she said, "Both animals are from the cat family, but the lion often weighs as much as three hundred pounds," the group members might be on the alert to hear how much leopards weigh or how their weight differs from lions.

- e. Summary – bringing parts of the message together for the big picture

Example:

A resident listening to a presentation of a neighborhood watch program might be interested in "bottom line" statements of benefits as opposed to specific statistics. A police chief summarizing the program might make broad statements like, "theft and vandalism will all but disappear."

- f. Listing – providing a list of examples or steps

Example:

Explaining how to operate a fire extinguisher, the instructor says, "The *first* step is to pull the pin out of the handle." Students receiving this instruction might begin listening for "cue" words such as "next," "then," or "the second step is."

COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-2
“COMMUNICATION CLIPS”

D. Active listening

1. Is the process of receiving a message from a sender, letting the listener know you are attentive and reflecting the message back to the sender.
2. Giving the sender your attention
 - a. Avoid distractions.
 1. Noise
 2. Other people interrupting
 3. Temperature and environment
 4. Visual distractions

Example:

Television, “eye catching” activities, etc.

COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-3
“PLAYING IT OUT IN REAL LIFE”

- b. Remove emotional filters – it is difficult to receive a message at its face value if it passes through a mind that is involved with anger or great affection.

Note to Specialist: Ask the students to explain the saying “love is blind.”

- c. Avoid preparing a reply - often, we hear something from the sender that sets our mind to work immediately preparing a rebuttal or explanation. We often get so involved in this; we become unaware of what the speaker has said.

Note to Specialist: Have the students give examples of when this is most likely to happen.

- d. Focus on the message – sometimes this is work.

Note to Specialist: Emphasize that this usually takes more effort than is expected.

- e. Pay attention to the speaker’s non-verbal communication.
- f. These behaviors and actions can change the meaning of the message.
 - 1. Inflection
 - 2. Facial expressions
 - 3. Gestures
 - 4. Body language

Note to Specialist: See Module D.24 - Communicate Verbally for more information on non-verbal communication.

- 3. Let the sender know you are attentive.
 - a. Maintain eye contact.
 - b. Lean toward the speaker slightly.
 - c. Nod occasionally.
 - d. Respond verbally – “yes,” “I see,” “mmmm,” or empathetic grunts.

Note to Specialist: Have the students’ role play a through d above as a listener. The sender may speak about anything they wish.

- 4. Reflect the message back to the sender.

- a. Put important points into your own words.

Example:

A customer very angrily fires out, "I can't tell you how upset I am with this product. It won't do half of the things your lying salesman said it would do!"

A reflection would be, "You're angry because the product does not work the way you were promised it would."

- b. Pace your comments – don't repeat or reflect everything a speaker says. This could be annoying and slow down communication. Instead, wait for two or three points to be given, then reflect and summarize.

COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-4
"SEE ME LISTENING"

Administer Post-Assessment

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-1
“INDUSTRIAL FEEDBACK”

OBJECTIVE: To identify the kind and nature of feedback in business and industry

RESOURCES:

- Work Sheet— Learning Activity D.21-1
- Pen or pencil
- Writing board
- Board marker or chalk

SUGGESTED TIME: 1 hour

DIRECTIONS:

1. Distribute a copy of the work sheet for Learning Activity D.21-1 “Employer Feedback Survey Form” to each student.
2. Review the directions with the students.
3. Have students complete the “Employer Feedback Survey Form” through an interview with an employer.
4. After surveys are completed, have each student report their results and record it on a writing board for all to see using the following summary outline:

Employees’ Verbal Comments✓
Employees’ Written Comments✓
Employees’ Behavior
Customers’ Verbal Comments✓
Customers’ Written Comments
Customers’ Behavior✓
Financial records✓
Formal evaluations
Others (list):

Used for:
Product selection✓
Pricing
Store policies
Others (list):

Effectiveness:
1. 4. ✓
2. 5. ✓✓
3. ✓✓

5. Discuss characteristics or patterns as they appear on the board.

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-1
“INDUSTRIAL FEEDBACK”
WORK SHEET

EMPLOYER FEEDBACK SURVEY FORM

DIRECTIONS: Make an appointment with an employer who is willing to participate in a short survey. Verbally, ask the employer the following questions and document the responses on the form as they answer.

QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the following kinds of feedback is part of your company's communication?

Employees' Verbal Comments _____

Employees' Written Comments _____

Employees' Behavior _____

Customers' Verbal Comments _____

Customers' Written Comments _____

Customers' Behavior _____

Financial Records _____

Formal Evaluations _____

Others (list):

2. The feedback you receive at your company is used for

Product selection _____

Pricing _____

Store policies _____

Others (list):

3. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent), how would you rate the quality of your feedback?



LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-2
“COMMUNICATION CLIPS”

OBJECTIVE: To identify communication strategies

RESOURCES:

- VCR and videotapes
- Television
- Index cards

SUGGESTED TIME: 1 hour

DIRECTIONS:

1. Assign students to work in pairs out of class to complete this assignment.
2. Prepare enough index cards for each pair by writing one of the following strategies on each card: Inference, Generalization, Cause and Effect, Compare and Contrast, Summary and Listing. Use each an equal number of times.
3. Randomly give one card to each pair.
4. Using a VCR, the pair will work together out of class to record a newscast, commercial, or show from a television channel that contains an example of the communication strategy given on the index card.
5. Each pair will play a “clip” from the tape that represents the best example of the strategy.
6. By listening, the class must identify the communication strategy demonstrated on the tape.
7. After each tape, discuss how the use of that strategy would or would not help a listener focus on main points.

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-3
“PLAYING IT OUT IN REAL LIFE”

OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate the effect of distractions on communication

RESOURCES:

- Work Sheets— Learning Activity D.21-3
- Large portable cassette or CD player and pre-recorded music
- Large electric box fan
- Large photographs
- Stack of papers
- Scissors
- Extension cord
- Piece of jewelry

SUGGESTED TIME: 1 hour

DIRECTIONS:

1. Divide the class into four groups.
2. Give each group one work sheet of directions.
3. Explain that each group will role-play a situation in which communication is blocked or hindered by distractions.
4. Although most of the role-play can be ad-libbed, students should develop a plan for their role-play.
5. As the students plan, the specialist should go to each group to monitor and coach their planning.
6. Have each group present their role-play.
7. Follow each role-play with a short discussion. The following questions are given as discussion starters.

- a. What kinds of things like this happen at work, school, home etc.?
- b. How successful are you at overcoming these kinds of distractions?
- c. What kinds of things can you do that help overcome these distractions?
- d. If you take observable action to overcome distractions, how do other people respond to you?

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-3
“PLAYING IT OUT IN REAL LIFE”
WORK SHEETS

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP 1:

Your group will present a short skit or role-play that demonstrates how external noise can hinder good communication by making it difficult to hear and concentrate. Everyone in the group should have a part in the role-play. Add your own dialogue or ideas. Be creative!

Start with one person explaining something to one or more listeners. This might be how to complete a homework assignment, how to find a new restaurant or store, or how to change the spark plugs in a car – you get the idea.

As this explanation begins, one or more other members of the group come by with a portable cassette/CD player, blasting music, singing along and talking. They come right up to the first group trying to hear the explanation and continue to enjoy their music.

Several attempts should be made to overcome the distraction. Some suggestions are:

1. Members of the “explanation” group stop and stare at the “music” group.
2. Members of the “explanation” group tell the “music” group something like, “Excuse me, we’re trying to hear this explanation.”
3. Members of the “explanation” group move closer together, lean in and talk louder, but the “music” group gets louder.

In each case, the “music” group should pause or back off momentarily but quickly come back as a distraction.

Finally someone from the “explanation” group asks the music group to be quiet for just a minute so you can hear the explanation. The “music” group complies. The “explanation” group wraps up quickly and everyone (perhaps including some of the “music” group) says something like, “Oh, I get it,” “I understand now,” or “Thanks for explaining.”

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP 2:

Your group will present a short skit or role-play that demonstrates how others interrupting your message can hinder good communication by making it difficult to follow the message and concentrate. Everyone in the group should have a part in the role-play. The following is a suggestion for a role-play. Add your own dialogue or ideas. Be creative!

Start with one person explaining something to one or more listeners. This might be how to complete a homework assignment, how to find a new restaurant or store, or how to change spark plugs in a car – you get the idea.

As the explanation begins, other members of the group come up and interrupt. Some suggestions for interruption are:

1. Need to borrow money.
2. Boss or teacher needs to see someone.
3. Someone jumps in to correct the speaker about something they believe has been said incorrectly.
4. Lost and need directions.
5. Others?

In each case, the “explanation” group should find it a little difficult to get back into the explanation. Use comments like, “Where was I?” “Wait a minute, could you back up. I don’t remember what you just said,” etc. The “explanation” group might even “huddle” together to discourage interruptions, but to no avail. After the 2nd or 3rd interruption, listeners might begin to demonstrate their frustration with comments like, “Not again,” or “I can’t believe this.”

Finally the “explanation” group decides they need some privacy, points toward a door (this might be a door to a hall), and says let’s go in there and lock the door. Go through the door and close it. After 3 or 4 seconds come back in making comments like, “It’s a lot clearer now,” “Thanks for explaining,” “Now I understand,” etc.

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP 3:

Your group will present a short skit or role-play that demonstrates how temperature and environment can hinder good communication by making it difficult to give attention to the message. Everyone in the group should have a part in the role-play. The following is a suggestion for a role-play. Add your own dialogue or ideas. Be creative!

Start with one person explaining something to one or more listeners. This might be how to complete a homework assignment, how to find a new restaurant or store, or how to change spark plugs in a car – you get the idea.

As the explanation begins, two other members of the group position a large box fan *very close* to the “explanation” group. This interrupts the group with comments like, “where did *that* come from,” “or “I’m freezing, can we turn down the air?” Paper might even blow out of the hands of someone in the group.

Eventually, someone turns the fan off and the explanation continues. Then, someone comes by acting as if they are very hot, see the fan, turns it on and says, “that’s more like it!” The interruption of the “explanation” group starts again. Once more, someone turns off the fan. The “explanation” group could consider moving away from the fan; but, once again, before they can move, someone who believes the temperature is too hot comes by, repositions the fan close to the “explanation” group and turns it on again.

Finally, out of desperation, a member of the “explanation” group says, “I’ll take care of this,” grabs a pair of scissors, unplugs the fan from the power socket, and **PRETENDS** to cut the cord.

Caution Caution Caution – Do not even pretend to cut the extension cord without first unplugging the cord from the wall power socket!

After that, the “explanation” group quickly finishes the explanation and the listeners respond with comments like “Now I understand,” “That was a great explanation,” or “Thank you for sharing that with me.”

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP 4:

Your group will present a short skit or role-play that demonstrates how visual distractions can hinder good communication by making it difficult to follow the message and concentrate. Everyone in the group should have a part in the role-play. The following is a suggestion for a role-play. Add your own dialog or ideas. Be creative!

Start with one person explaining something to one or more listeners. This might be how to complete a homework assignment, how to find a new restaurant or store, or how to change spark plugs in a car – you get the idea.

As the explanation begins, other members of the group take turns disrupting the communication by using visual distractions. Some suggestions for interruption are:

1. Coming by and showing pictures.
2. Showing a friend a new piece of jewelry.
3. Someone drops a stack of papers.
4. Others?

Members of the distracting group should not make much noise. In each case, listeners begin looking at the distractions and stop listening. The sender might become increasingly frustrated with comments like, “As I was saying,” or “Look at me, I’m over here!” The listeners refocus, but must have parts of the explanation repeated or ask questions because they have lost their place.

Finally, out of frustration, the sender of the “explanation” group physically positions all of the listeners so they cannot see the distraction and quickly finishes the explanation. The listeners thank the sender for a great explanation and helping them to understand it.

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-4
“SEE ME LISTENING”

OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate active listening

RESOURCES:

- Work Sheet—Learning Activity D.21-4
- Videotapes and camera
- VCR and television

SUGGESTED TIME: 2 hours

DIRECTIONS:

1. Assign students to work in pairs.
2. Tell the students they will take turns listening to their partner for three to four minutes.
3. This listening exercise will be videotaped.
4. Place two chairs or desks at the front of the room, angled toward each other so that the two students can talk to each other comfortably.
5. Pass out copies of the work sheet for Learning Activity D.21-4 “Active Listening Checklist”. (Each student needs enough copies to evaluate every other student and one for their own reference.)
6. The speaker will take three to four minutes to talk about their choice of:
 - a. a favorite personal experience.
 - b. a hobby.
 - c. a recent trip.
 - d. someone or something very meaningful in their life.
7. The listener will demonstrate behavior listed on the checklist. They are allowed to ask no more than two questions. Other responses must be body language, verbal responses such as “yes,” “I see,” “empathetic grunts,” “mmmm,” or reflections of the speaker’s statements.

8. The listener must give at least two reflections.
9. Other students will provide evaluation feedback for the listener using the Active Listening Checklist.
10. After each recording, collect the completed Active Listening Checklists and give them to the listener.
11. Play the video recording for the class, making positive comments and suggestions. Allow others to contribute positive comments and observations.
12. Lead class discussion in the difficulty of this exercise and the listening strengths and weaknesses of the class as a whole.

LEARNING ACTIVITY D.21-4
“SEE ME LISTENING”
WORK SHEET

ACTIVE LISTENING CHECKLIST

Action/Behavior:

Rating:

	Poor/none				Excellent
1. Eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
2. Lean in slightly	1	2	3	4	5
3. Nod occasionally	1	2	3	4	5
4. Verbal responses – “yes,” “OK,” “I see,” “empathetic grunts,” or “mmmm”	1	2	3	4	5

Reflection:

5. Put important points into listeners words	1	2	3	4	5
6. At least two reflections	1	2	3	4	5
7. Paced reflections	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

PRE-ASSESSMENT POST-ASSESSMENT

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Short phrases or lists of points as opposed to writing sentences is suggested.

1. Identify the role of each of the following in the communication process.

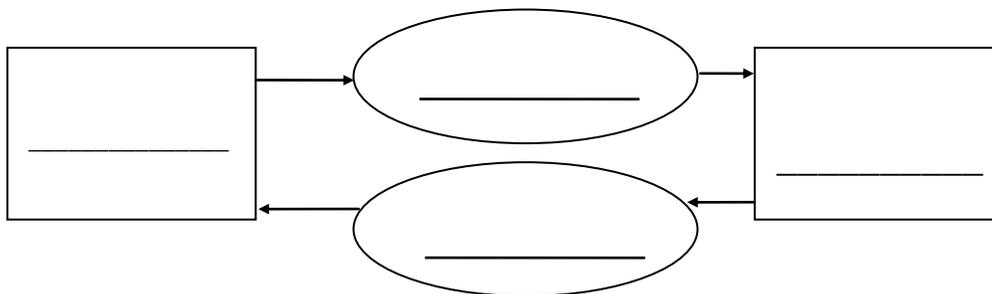
a. Feedback –

b. Sender –

c. Message –

d. Receiver –

2. Fill in the blanks to complete the diagram for the communication cycle.



3. List at least 3 things a receiver can to give the sender his/her attention.

4. Give at least 3 communication strategies that can help direct a listener to important points.

5. Give at least 3 things the receiver can do to let the sender know they are attentive.

6. Reflect the following messages:

- a. A student who just received their schedule of classes says, "Boy, am I in trouble! I got Jackson for English, Garsett for Algebra and Sommers for Physics. This is the worst!"

- b. “This burns me up! Everybody in Ms. Kellog’s class talks all the time and she doesn’t do anything. I open my mouth *one time* and get sent to the office. That’s not right!”

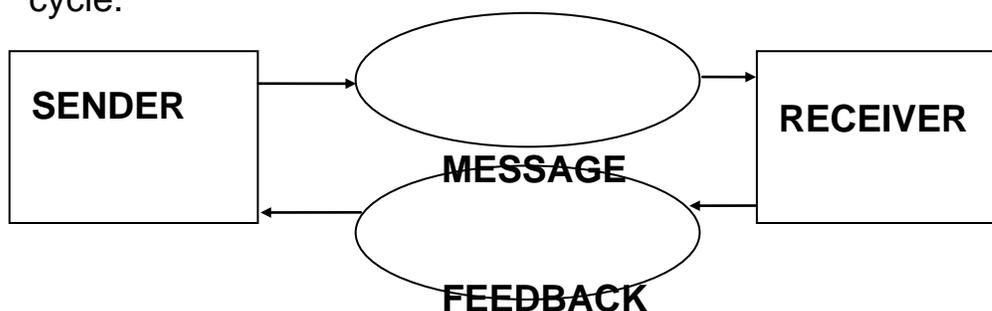
- c. “I love Christmas! Every year my cousins come in from Canada for the holidays. I love seeing them. We have so much fun together. It’s going to be great!”

ANSWER KEY

PRE-ASSESSMENT POST-ASSESSMENT

1. Identify the role of each of the following in the communication process.
 - Feedback – A response from the receiver that lets the sender know if the message has been understood
 - Sender – Person giving a message to another person or group
 - Message – Thought or concept being communicated
 - Receiver – Person or group to whom the message is sent

2. Fill in the blanks to complete the diagram for the communication cycle.



3. List at least 3 things a receiver can do to give the sender his/her attention.
 - Avoid distractions
 - Remove emotion filters
 - Avoid preparing a reply
 - Focus on the message
 - Pay attention to the speaker's nonverbal communication

4. Give at least 3 communication strategies that can help direct a listener to important points.
 - Inference
 - Compare and contrast
 - Generalizations
 - Summary
 - Cause and effect
 - Listing

5. Give at least 3 things the receiver can do to let the sender know they are attentive.
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Lean in slightly
 - Nod occasionally
 - Respond verbally – “yes,” “OK,” “I see,” “empathetic grunts,” or “mmmm”

6. Reflect the following messages:
 - a. A student who just received their schedule of classes says, “Boy, am I in trouble! I got Jackson for English, Garsett for Algebra and Sommers for Physics. This is the worst!”
 - * Answers may vary, but something like, “You’re concerned because of the teachers you are scheduled with.”

 - b. “This burns me up! Everybody in Ms. Kellog’s class talks all the time and she doesn’t do anything. I open my mouth *one time* and get sent to the office. That’s not right!”
 - * Answers may vary, but something like, “You’re angry because you believe Ms. Kellog is unfair toward you with her rule about talking.”

c. “I love Christmas! Every year my cousins come in from Canada for the holidays. I love seeing them. We have so much fun together. It’s going to be great!”

* Answers may vary, but something like, “you enjoy spending time with your cousins at Christmas.”