

Professional Communication (BHCS 203) [B.SC\(H\)CS II Sem Lectures:29&30](#)

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Unit V

Topic:

Passive Learning:

According to the International Listening Association, listening is, “The process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.” But in a world where we are constantly bombarded with information and sound, sometimes it can be difficult to listen and fully comprehend the stimuli around us.

As babies we learn to listen to sounds using discriminative listening skills; we can distinguish between the voices of our mothers and fathers, and while we may not comprehend the messages being given, we are able to hear and process sounds and tones. Therapists and teachers utilize listening skills on a regular basis, and as compassionate and caring human beings, listening helps further our relationships with people and improves our bonds with friends and family members. Students use listening to better understand their subjects, and we regularly apply our passive listening skills to our experience of music and television.

There are a number of different types of listening including both active and passive listening, which are both important factors in effective communication.

While active listening allows the listener to engage with the speaker, passive listening encourages the listener to observe the speaker quietly.

What is Passive Listening?

When a person is practicing passive listening, he is sitting quietly without responding to what the speaker is saying. When you listen to music or a podcast or even the news, you are practicing passive listening. Sometimes passive listening may require a few open-ended replies to keep the speaker talking, however, this technique generally requires focused concentration and minimal verbal feedback from the listener. Listening to a lecture in school or watching a movie both require passive listening skills, and the technique can improve your communication and your ability to clearly understand the information being presented.

While passive listening requires the listener to sit back quietly and absorb information, active listening is about engaging the speaker verbally and through the use of body language. Active listening, which is often used in conflict resolution, counseling, and general conversation, requires the listener to react to the speaker’s body language as well as verbal cues in order to understand the subject at hand. Active listening allows for engaging feedback while passive listening requires silent participation on behalf of the listener .

How to Improve Your Passive Listening Skills

The key to becoming a better communicator lies within your ability to listen. Most people spend more time speaking or crafting a response in their head instead of actually paying attention to what the speaker is saying. I heard a quote recently that said something to the effect of, “we

listen to respond, not to understand. Becoming a better passive listener is an important skill, and can be attained with the following simple steps:

1. Focus

Turn off your electronics (yes, even your phone!) and try to concentrate on the speaker. Put your laptop away, and don't respond to any distractions. Phone calls, emails, and text messages can wait.

2. Position

Face the speaker and sit in a position that tells her you're ready to listen. Keep your legs uncrossed and your arms open. Limit body movement, and lean in toward the speaker so she knows you're paying attention. There's almost nothing worse than taking the time to talk to someone who isn't displaying open body language, it's the first clue that you have a fake listener on your hands.

3. Silence

Passive listening requires little to zero verbal replies from the listener. As a listener, try to focus on the speaker's body language as well as his words. You may reply silently with a nod, or the response, "tell me more . . ." however, passive listening primarily asks the listener to remain completely quiet.

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4. Enhanced Focus

This goes along with the first step, once you've removed distractions like cell phones and personal computers further enhance your ability to practice effective passive listening by refraining from indulging in a personal internal dialog. Try to avoid crafting any kind of response to what the speaker says instead focus exclusively on his or her words and body language. Does the speaker have an open body position? Is his or her arms crossed? Do his or her words connect somehow to what he or she is saying? Without crafting a response, simply sit and passively and absorb your speaker's words, body language, and facial expressions. You'll be amazed at how much information you can glean from these simple bodily clues. Patryk and Kasia Wezowski's Micro Expressions Training and Body Language for Lie Detection is a great course to enable further understanding of how humans communicate using micro expressions. An understanding of the topic will help further your ability to effectively practice passive listening.

5. Lean In

Again, part of a successful passive listener's body vocabulary, leaning in tells the listener that you truly are engaged with the subject, even if you aren't responding verbally. Leaning in is an essential tool of the passive listener, and enables the speaker to relax and express him or herself more openly.

Practicing passive listening can be an effective tool in counseling, office management, and everyday interactions with friends and family. The process encourages listening without actively

responding, and requires a certain level of restraint and focus on behalf of the listener. Passive listening can help improve your relationships with people and can provide both the speaker and the listener with a new appreciation for listening and communication in general. Passive listening requires the listener to sit back and focus, without crafting an immediate response, and forces the listener to concentrate his or her attention completely on the words and body language of the speaker. This listening technique encourages complete attention and a near meditative effort on behalf of the listener. Passive listening can be attained through focus, body position, and silence.

As active members of modern society, we often forget to sit back and focus on a single point or subject at any given time. We are constantly being asked to multitask and give our attention to multiple topics at once. Our phones ring, text messages chime, and our email alerts are constantly asking us pay attention. Passive listening can help us advance our relationships and our communication skills.