

# Ten Commandments for Active Listening

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1. Stop talking! You can't listen if you're talking. You have two ears and one mouth. Use them in that ratio.
2. Put the other person at ease. Help the other to feel relaxed and free to talk.
3. Prove that you want to listen. Use two eyes and two ears. Act interested. Make encouraging nods and words like "uh huh", "go on," and "what else?" Listen to understand vs. to defend.
4. Remove distractions. Don't channel surf the TV or read the newspaper or emails while the other talks.
5. Empathize. Empathize. Empathize. Put yourself into the other person's shoes.
6. Be patient. Allow the other person time to speak. Don't interrupt or complete the other's sentences.
7. Don't attack or criticize. This puts the other on the defensive. He or she may clam up and quit talking. Don't throw a hardball at the other. Toss a softball that can be caught. Think of talking as playing a game of catch. Don't try to bean the other person with a fastball.
8. Ask questions. This develops more understanding. "So what you are saying is?" "Is this what you mean?" "So you are feeling..." "That's interesting, go on." Reflect, Confirm, Clarify, Summarize.
9. Hold your temper. Anger throws out understanding as well as reason.
10. Stop talking! This is the first and the last because all the rest depend on this for listening. Remember you have two ears and one mouth. Use in that ratio.