

# *"Triple A" Listening*



## *“Triple A” Listening*

Good conversations require self-awareness, attention, and focused effort known as active listening. Listening is not the same as hearing. Listening is a conscious activity based on three skills: attitude, attention, and adjustment – known as “Triple A” listening.

1. **Attitude.** When you start a conversation, have a good attitude and positive mindset as you listen. Limit negative thoughts before you've fully heard what someone has to say. A negative attitude is distracting, and you might not hear the other person.
2. **Attention.** Intentionally show the other person you're listening through verbal and physical cues. Be encouraging by making eye contact, nodding as they speak, smiling, and mirroring their body language. Ignore distractions and avoid focusing on your own problems.
3. **Adjustment.** Keep an open mind as you listen, and be willing to change, adapt, and adjust to follow the speaker's train of thought. Adapt your perspective based on what they say and be willing to change your mind. To increase your understanding of what's being said, repeat information and ask questions.

These three basic listening skills help you become an active listener. If you think you need to have a better attitude, pay more attention, and be more flexible, you might have barriers to good listening. Once you're aware of these barriers, you can adjust.



## Barriers to *Triple A* Listening

Check off any of the following that apply to you.

- You tend to get bored when listening to others speak.
- You often get distracted by what's going on internally, such as having a headache, being hungry, or not feeling well.
- Having an open mind is hard for you because you believe you already know what others are going to say or have answers to what they are speaking about.
- Your mind is often filled with thoughts, or you tend to daydream.
- You get distracted by what's going on around you, like music, traffic, or phone notifications.
- You have emotional reactions, biases, or prejudices that block you from really hearing what others are saying.
- You get triggered when someone talks about hot-button topics like politics or religion.
- You have problems understanding what others are saying (e.g., when there are language barriers).
- You have a medical condition that makes it difficult for you to pay attention.

If you checked off two or more statements, you might want to deal with these barriers to improve your active listening skills.



## Here are Some Suggestions:

- **Wait** until someone is done speaking before you respond
- Ask **open-ended** questions instead of yes/no questions
- **Summarize** their words out loud or in your head.
- Begin conversations with a **good attitude** and an **open mind**
- Give the speaker **respect** and avoid **interrupting**
- Put yourself in the **other person's shoes**
- **Eliminate** as many outside **distractions** as possible, including background noise
- **Be patient** while others are speaking
- **Observe nonverbal** signs like the speaker's body movements and posture
- Work on ways to **focus** and **improve your attention span**



## Practice “Triple A” Listening

### How to ‘listen’ examples:

- ⚠ **Attitude.** Maybe you aren’t interested in a coworker’s presentation. Put a positive spin on it and think something like, “David has a much different skill set than me, so I can probably learn a lot from his presentation.” If you’re in a bad mood or distracted by your own problems, reschedule a meeting or conversation, if possible.
- ⚠ **Attention.** If you're in a meeting, communicate that you’re paying attention by making eye contact with the speaker, nodding, and writing down important points. If someone is speaking to you, mimic their body language and ask questions.
- ⚠ **Adjustment.** Perhaps you don't agree with your employer’s strategies. In the next meeting you have with them, put your feelings aside. It's okay to disagree with someone, but really listen before reacting, formulating a response, or tuning them out. Offer a respectful, thoughtful response – even if you disagree.



## Mastery<sup>1</sup> Practice

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**For the next two weeks, ask yourself the following questions whenever you're engaged in a conversation.**

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1. What is this conversation about?
2. What are the main ideas, conclusions, or arguments?
3. Are the speaker's conclusions truthful or false?
4. How does this affect me?
5. What can I do and how can I respond?
6. What can I do to have a good attitude, pay attention, and adjust as needed?

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<sup>1</sup> According to George Leonard it takes ten thousand hours to master anything. To put it in real life terms ten thousand hours would equate to doing something for forty hours per week for 50 weeks (everyone needs 2 weeks/year vacation) per year for 5 years.



