

# Active Listening

“A good listener tries to understand thoroughly what the other person is saying.

In the end he may disagree sharply, but before he disagrees, he wants to know exactly what it is...”

– Kenneth A. Wells

Active, effective listening is a habit, as well as the foundation of effective communication.

Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to, whether in a group or one-on-one, in order to understand what he or she is saying. As the listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with, but rather understand, what they are saying.

## Prepare with a positive, engaged attitude

- **Focus your attention on the subject**  
Stop all non-relevant activities beforehand to orient yourself to the speaker or the topic
- **Review mentally what you already know about the subject**  
Organize in advance relevant material in order to develop it further  
(previous lectures, TV programs, newspaper articles, web sites, prior real life experience, etc.)
- **Avoid distractions**  
Seat yourself appropriately close to the speaker  
Avoid distractions (a window, a talkative neighbor, noise, etc.)
- **Acknowledge any emotional state**  
Suspend emotions until later, or  
Passively participate unless you can control your emotions
- **Set aside your prejudices, your opinions**  
You are present to learn what the speaker has to say, not the other way around