


STUDY SMART
Lesson #6
LISTENING

As you learned in Lesson #5, there are many actions you can take to improve your listening. But, there are many things you can do which harm listening also. In this lesson, you will learn about these listening problems.

Q: What is the biggest listening problem?

Lack of interest is without question the number one killer of good listening. Students often blame teachers for being boring or say their grades are low because the subject is not interesting. Another common complaint is that the material has no use.

All of these may be true but when you get a low grade, there is no discount because the class was boring. So you must get the information you need to learn somehow. If you are in the class anyway, you might as well use the time well and learn. That way you will not have to spend more time later.

Q: Can I do anything to make class more interesting?

Yes, you can; here are three ideas.

1. Make a game of the class. Reward yourself for staying awake, identifying main points, and taking good notes.
2. Look for ways you can use the material now. Use history to impress your friends and parents; use math to compute prices, time and size; use science to talk about current issues such as ecology and energy.
talk
3. Challenge yourself; set a goal for yourself and make a plan to meet the goal. Use your time well to listen, to read and to become informed.
talk

Q: Can I do anything about poor concentration?

Yes, losing concentration is probably in second place as a reason for poor listening.

Improving concentration does require effort. But, it can be done. Without, good attention it is impossible to learn well, so working on concentration is a good idea.

To improve concentration, begin by making a record of how often you lose concentration. Get some post-it notes and make one for every class by writing the subject at the top. Then, every time your attention wanders to something other than class, make a mark on the top of your note. At the end of class, count the marks you have made. Do this for five days and then average the numbers. This number will be the target for you to reduce. Make a separate average and target for each class because you will probably find you are more attentive in some classes than others.

As soon as you find yourself not concentrating return your attention to class. Coach yourself by saying, "Pay attention!" "Listen carefully" "Get your mind back on class." Also, recognize your achievements. When you have paid attention, say to yourself, "Good job, you paid attention for a long time." "Nice work, you had 5 less distractions than your average."

If you do this and still have trouble, go to your teacher or counselor. Many counselors can help you develop your attention.

Q: How can I keep from forgetting so much?

Forgetting is a big problem with listening. Most of us will forget 70 to 90% of what we hear if we pay attention normally. We forget much more when we do not pay attention.

You can reduce forgetting by doing two things.

First, be an active listener. Listen for main points, main idea indicator words and general themes. To remember requires that you do more than let words come in your ears. You have to think about the words and make them make sense. If you don't understand, ask questions.

Second, you can reduce forgetting by reviewing what you heard. Restate main ideas in your own words after class, review your notes and relate new ideas to ideas presented in class. One good idea many students use is to make up questions about material presented in class. Some times these students will have a whole test made up which they can use to study for the teacher's test.

Finally, you should take responsibility for learning by listening. You can do this by:

1. Avoiding distractions - sit where you can learn the most and have the fewest interruptions. The front, middle of the room is usually best and the back and sides are usually worst.

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2. Prepare to listen - make sure you think about class before it begins. Predict topics, prepare questions or pose problems.
3. Don't blame others - look for ways you can be responsible. Find ways you can change to listen better. Make a plan to improve your listening.

Q: How can I begin?

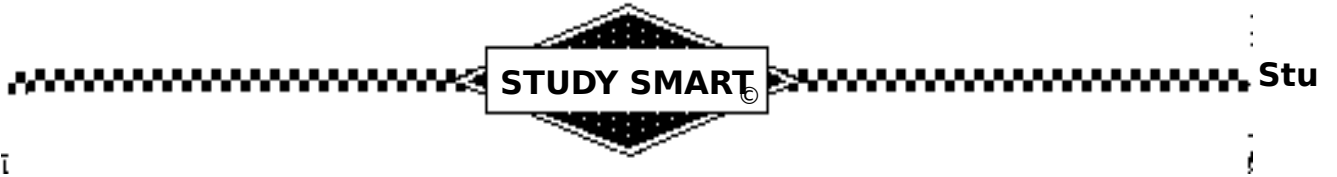
Listening, like other aspects of school success, is a product of what you do. You can take action to be a better listener and learn more.

Begin by analyzing your listening. Answer these questions:

- Do I frequently get distracted?
- Do I lose concentration?
- Do I always know the main points?
- Do I forget much of what my teachers say?
- Do I get bored a lot?

If these things happen sometimes or often, then you should plan to be a better listener. Start with a plan for one class. First, describe the class characteristics and the listening problems you have. For example, you may not be interested or the teacher may talk too slowly to maintain your attention. Then, identify how you can Plan, Act and Test to be a better listener. You can use form 6.1 if you wish. Try out this plan; make changes until you have improved your listening. Then, make a similar plan for every class.

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**dy Smart
Form 6.1
Listening Plan**

Class

Characteristics and Listening Problems

Actions

Prepare

Act

Test