

## Learning by Listening

*You can learn a lot through listening. In college, it will be a prime source of information. Unfortunately, people do not instinctively listen well. Quite the reverse, listening is a skill that must be developed.*

**If you apply the following suggestions, you will find yourself listening more effectively both in class and out.**

- 1. Determine why it is important for you to listen to what the speaker is saying.** We only do well those things that we want to do well. If you don't have an immediate, valid reason for listening to a speaker, you are an unmotivated listener.
- 2. The responsibility for interest and understanding lie with you, not with the speaker.** Learning is up to the learner. If you simply want to sit passively and blame the speaker for your lack of success, then you're not a serious learner.
- 3. If you can't hear, arrange things so you can.** Move away from sources of noise, human or mechanical. Sit where you can see the speaker easily and where other distractions are at a minimum.
- 4. Listen to what the speaker is saying.** Don't tune the speaker out because you don't like something about him/her or his/her message. The people whose ideas disagree with your own are the very people we should listen to with the greatest care. Be sure you understand something before you reject it.
- 5. Look for the speaker's pattern of organization.** In a lecture, a speaker is generally referring to notes or some other source of information. You can understand much better if you are able to see what he's driving at and how s/he's getting there.
- 6. Look for the main idea or ideas of the presentation.** Facts are important only as they support the speaker's points. If you have trouble distinguishing between the important and the trivial, seek assistance from a Learning Assistance staff person in the Learning Center.
- 7. Don't let your mind wander.** Your brain moves far more rapidly than the swiftest mouth and the temptation to stray away is tempting. Your attention span can be increased, however, through deliberate effort. Continue to practice the habit of attention, and don't be discouraged by early failures.
- 8. Take notes while you listen.** Even if you recognize everything being said, jot it down because you won't remember it later unless you do.

## When Instructors Talk Fast

- ***Leave large empty spaces in your notes*** Leave plenty of room for filling in information you missed. Use a signal or symbol that means you missed something so you'll remember to come back to it. Make the space obvious.
- ***Be willing to make choices*** When an instructor talks fast, focus your attention on key points. Don't try to write everything down. Choose what you think is important and don't panic. Stay with the lecture, write down key words, and revise your notes immediately after class.
- ***Exchange photocopies of notes with classmates*** Your fellow students might write down something you missed, and your notes might help them.
- ***Take more time to prepare for class*** Familiarity with a subject increases your ability to pick out key points. If an instructor lectures quickly or is difficult to understand, make a point of conducting a thorough preview of material to be covered. Set the stage for the lecture.
- ***Ask the instructor to slow down*** It's okay!! Simply ask the instructor to slow down or to repeat what you missed.