



Develop Your Listening Skills

You can learn a lot by listening, and your college courses will require that you do so. Here are some steps to becoming a better listener.

- ✓ **Find a motivation for listening.** Determine why what a speaker is saying is important to you. You may not love your physics class, but is it a necessary requirement for your major? If so, you should be motivated to learn what the class offers.
- ✓ **Take responsibility.** Remember that it's your responsibility to get interested in the topic, and it's your responsibility to understand the information. Show your interest and your desire to understand by asking questions when you are not sure of something.
- ✓ **Get a good seat.** If you can't hear, move to a better seat. Eliminate as many distractions as you can. The best seats in the house? Front row!
- ✓ **Keep an open mind.** Don't tune out if you don't agree with something the speaker says. You might be surprised by the outcome of the lecture or discussion, and you could learn a lot! And, another point of view is just that—a point of view. The more points of view you have, the more clearly you can see the big picture.
- ✓ **Look for patterns.** Look for the speaker's pattern of organization. Does she give a series of details and then explain how they connect to one another? Does he give an overview, then get down to specifics? Knowing the speaker's pattern can help you root out the most important parts of a lecture.
- ✓ **Get the main ideas.** Lectures often contain a series of main ideas, details and examples, but the examples and details might not make sense if you don't understand the main points. Doing the assigned readings and assignments before class will help you pick out the main ideas and most important information.
- ✓ **Stay alert.** Work on keeping your mind from wandering. If you do lose your focus, draw yourself back as soon as you can. Sit up straight, focus on the speaker and get back to business.
- ✓ **Write it down.** Taking notes can help you stay alert and actively involved in the class. It will also help you remember what the speaker is talking about. Find a good organizational system for note taking that really works for you.