

chapter nine

RECORD

CULTIVATING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS
AND DEVELOPING A NOTE-TAKING
SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR YOU



*"To listen well is as powerful a means of
communication as to talk well." — Chinese Proverb*

RECORD

Scan and QUESTION

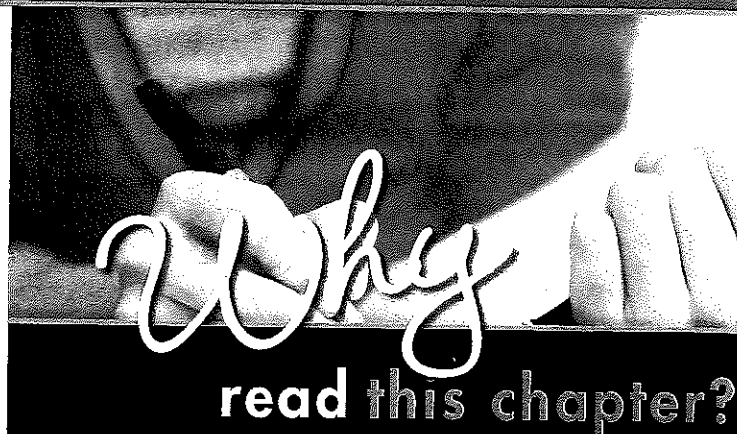
Take a few moments, **scan this chapter** and on page 224, write **five questions** that you think will be important to your mastery of this material. In addition to the two questions below, you will also find five questions from your authors.

Example:

- ✓ What are the four components of the character for the Chinese verb, "to listen?" (from page 207)
- ✓ Why is it important to identify key words during a lecture? (from page 211)

MyStudentSuccessLab

MyStudentSuccessLab is an online solution designed to help you acquire and develop (or hone) the skills you need to succeed. You will have access to peer-led video presentations and develop core skills through interactive exercises and projects.



Because you'll learn...

- The difference between listening and hearing
- How to overcome the obstacles to listening
- The importance of note-taking

Because you'll be able to...

- Use the L-STAR note-taking system
- Apply the outline, Cornell, and mapping note-taking systems
- Determine which note-taking style works best for certain classes

How

COLLEGE CHANGED MY LIFE



Name: *Patricia G. Moody, Ph.D.*
Institution: *Georgia Southern University and The University of South Carolina*
Major: *Business and Educational Administration*

I am the daughter of a peanut farmer and a housewife, and a first-generation college student who grew up in rural South Georgia. My mother graduated from high school, but my father only had a fifth-grade education. My father was the oldest of five children and had to quit school and go to work when his father died of influenza. He often said, "I am a farmer because I can't be anything else." My parents worked extremely hard to provide a good life for my brothers and me, to purchase their farmland, and to send us all to college.

Because they were undereducated and understood the importance of education, they not only encouraged my brothers and me to do well in school, they expected it. My father often told us, "Get yourself a good education!" We were expected to excel in academics and athletics, and we all did. My parents also expected us to have a good work ethic and to be good people with high personal standards. We were never to even think about giving up or ending up in second place! Most likely, my father's lessons were aimed directly at my two brothers, but I was listening, too, and I hung on every word.

Ironically, when I graduated from high school as the salutatorian of my class, star of the basketball team, president of the Senior class, and a member of the debate team, I was offered no academic or athletic scholarships because those awards went primarily to young men. It never occurred to me or other women to question this at the time, because "that was just the way it was."

Nevertheless, I knew I wanted to go to college because I loved learning. My older brother had gone to college, so he paved the way for me. I wanted more even though I had no idea what "more" was.

I had no idea what college was all about when my parents dropped me off at Georgia Southern University that Sunday afternoon, about five hours from my home. I didn't know how to register, how to choose a major, what a major was, or what three credit hours meant. This was a new world for me, and I was frightened of all the changes I was facing. Classes were much harder than high school, and I was no longer a star at anything, so I struggled with everything. I only knew a few people, and I was very homesick. Botany was the hardest course I had ever taken—still is—but I managed to pass. Because I "dug in," worked hard, and graduated from college, many wonderful opportunities came my way.

High school teachers, college professors, and the overall college experience changed my life. I often wonder what I might have done with my life if I had chosen not to go to college; most likely I would have stayed in South Georgia. Although this is a wonderful part of the country, had I not left and gone to college, I would have never had the great opportunities because of the doors education opened for me.

After teaching in high school for seven years, I moved with my family to Columbia, South Carolina, where my husband worked with General Motors. On a

whim, I decided to enroll in two courses at the University of South Carolina to renew my certificate. I was offered a graduate assistantship to supervise student teachers, and then I was offered an instructor's position. After earning two Masters degrees, I pursued a Ph.D. and upon graduation, I was fortunate to have the opportunity of being placed in a tenure track. Over the next few years, I became a tenured professor, a department chair, and, ultimately, Dean of my college at the University of South Carolina.

The advice I offer anyone today is this: "Many doors will open for you if you get a good education and work hard and pay the price—but you have to walk

through the door; in other words, you have to take risks." I have been richly blessed because I heeded my father's advice: "Get yourself a good education!" I am grateful for the opportunities and struggles that came my way through the college experience. Because I have a good education, I have been able to travel all over the country speaking to over 100,000 people; I have authored and co-authored over 30 books; and from China to Africa to Ireland to Switzerland, I have traveled all over the world. So I say to you, as my father said to me, "Get yourself a good education!" College will change your world!

THINK about it

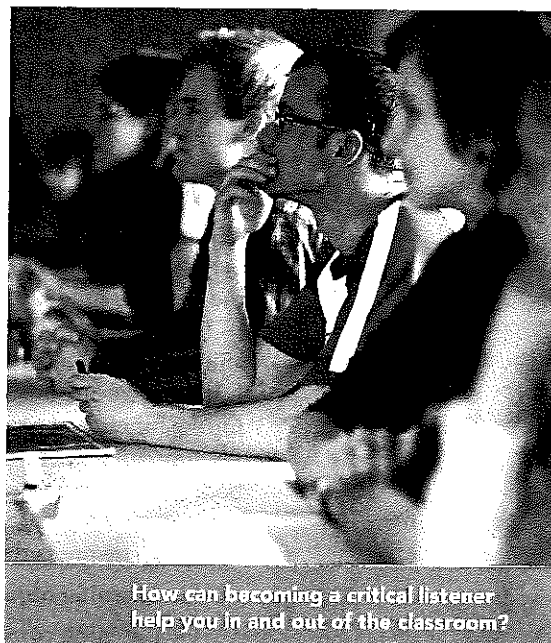
1. Patricia refers to the high expectations her parents had for her and her brothers. How do you think this influenced her accomplishments? Who has high expectations for you? What if you were the only one who had high expectations for yourself?
2. Patricia had many doors opened to her—the opportunity to teach in college, to speak in over 40 states, and to travel all over the world. What opportunities do you expect college to offer you?

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

Why Does Listening Really Matter in Classes and Relationships?

Listening is a survival skill. Period! It is that simple! "*I know listening is important,*" you might say, but few ever think of the paramount significance listening has on our everyday lives. It is necessary for:

- establishing and improving relationships
- personal growth
- showing respect to others
- professional rapport
- showing empathy and compassion
- learning new information
- understanding others' opinions and views
- basic survival
- entertainment
- health



How can becoming a critical listener help you in and out of the classroom?

How much time do you think you spend listening every day? Research suggests that we spend almost 70 percent of our waking time communicating, and **53 percent of that time is spent in listening situations** (Adler, Rosenfeld, and Proctor, 2009). Effective listening skills can mean the difference between success or failure, A's or F's, relationships or loneliness, and in some cases and careers, life or death.

For students, good listening skills are critical. Over the next four years, you will be given a lot of information through lectures. Cultivating and improving your active listening skills will help you to understand the material, take accurate notes, participate in class discussions, communicate with your peers more effectively, and become more actively engaged in your learning process.

I THINK I HEARD YOU LISTENING

Is There Really a Difference Between Listening and Hearing?

No doubt you've been in a communication situation where a misunderstanding took place. Either you hear something incorrectly or someone hears you incorrectly *or* it could be that someone hears your message but misinterprets it. These communication blunders arise because we tend to view listening (and communication in general) as an automatic response, when in fact it is not.

Listening is a learned, voluntary activity. You must choose to do it. It is a skill, just as driving a car, painting a picture, or playing the piano. Becoming an active listener requires practice, time, mistakes, guidance, and active participation.

Hearing, however, is not learned; it is automatic and involuntary. If you are within range of a sound you will probably hear it, although you may not be listening to it. Hearing a sound does not guarantee that you know what it is, or from where it came. Listening actively, though, means making a conscious effort to focus on the sound you heard and to determine what it is.

"You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time."

—M. Scott Peck

LISTENING DEFINED

According to Ronald Adler (Adler et al., 2010), the drawing of the Chinese verb "to listen" (Figure 9.1) provides a comprehensive and practical definition of listening.

To the Chinese, listening involves the *ears*, the *eyes*, your *undivided attention*, and the *heart*. Do you make it a habit to listen with more than your ears? The Chinese view listening as a whole-body experience. People from Western cultures seem to have lost the ability to involve their whole body in the listening process. We tend to use only our ears, and sometimes we don't even use them very well.

At its core, listening is "the ability to hear, understand, analyze, respect, and appropriately respond to the meaning of another person's spoken and nonverbal messages" (Daly & Engleberg, 2006). Although this definition involves the word "hear," listening goes far beyond just the physical ability to catch sound waves.

The first step in listening *is* hearing, but true listening involves one's full attention and the ability to filter out distractions, emotional barriers, cultural differences, and religious biases. Listening means that you are making a conscious decision to understand and show reverence for the other person's communication efforts.

Listening needs to be personalized and internalized. To understand listening as a whole-body experience, we can define it on three levels:

1. Listening with a **purpose**
2. Listening **objectively**
3. Listening **constructively**

Successful Decisions

AN ACTIVITY FOR CRITICAL REFLECTION



Jennifer greatly disliked her biology instructor. She could not put her finger on just *why* she disliked her, but she just knew that Dr. Lipmon rubbed her the wrong way. This had been the case since the first day of class.

Other students seemed to like her and were able to carry on conversations with her, but not Jennifer. "Why?" she thought. "Why do I dislike her so much? She's not a bad teacher," she reasoned, "but I just can't stand to listen to her."

Jennifer decided to sit back for the next week and really try to figure out what the main problem was. As she sat in class and listened, she figured it out. She finally put her finger on the problem: she and Dr. Lipmon had completely different views on many things, including evolution and a woman's reproductive rights.

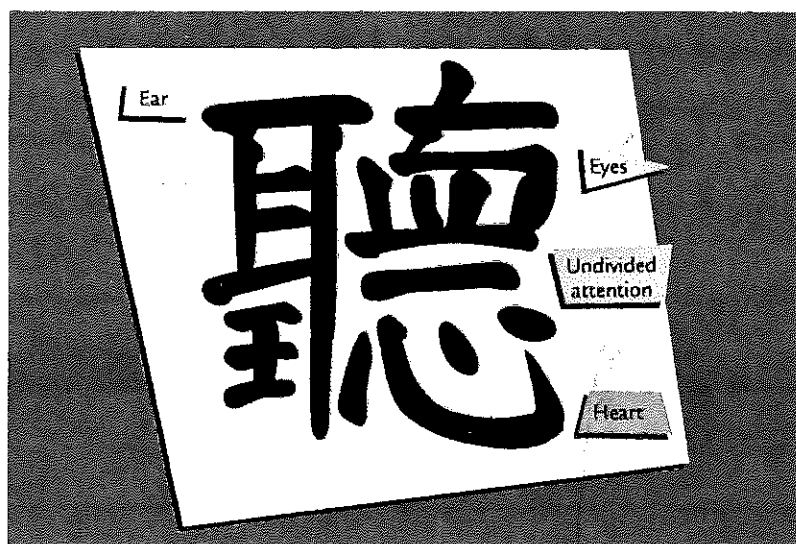
Every time Dr. Lipmon made a statement contrary to Jennifer's core beliefs, she cringed. She "shut down" and refused to listen any further. She transferred her dislike of

Dr. Lipmon's lectures and opinions onto her as a person. She knew this was affecting her grade and her knowledge base in class, but did not know how to manage or change the situation.

In your own words, what would you suggest that Jennifer do at this point? Pretend that she is enrolled at your institution. List at least five things that she could do to ensure her success. Think about what services are offered and what people might be of assistance to her.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Figure 9.1 Chinese Verb "To Listen"



Listening with a purpose suggests a need to recognize different types of listening situations—for example, class, worship, entertainment, and relationships. People do not listen the same way in every situation.

Listening objectively means listening with an open mind. You will give yourself few greater gifts than the gift of knowing how to listen without bias and prejudice. This is perhaps

the most difficult aspect of listening. If you have been cut off in mid-conversation or mid-sentence by someone who disagreed with you, or if someone has left the room while you were giving your opinion of a situation, you have had the experience of talking to people who do not know how to listen objectively.

Listening constructively means listening with the attitude of asking "How can this be helpful to my life, my education, my career, or my finances?" This type of listening involves evaluating the information you are hearing and determining whether it has meaning to your life. Sound easy? It is more difficult than it sounds because, again, we all tend to shut out information that we do not view as immediately helpful or useful. To listen constructively, you need to know how to listen and store information for later.

FOUR LISTENING STYLES DEFINED

What Is Your Orientation?

According to Steven McCornack (2007), interpersonal communication expert, author, and educator, there are *four different listening styles*: action-oriented, time-oriented, people-oriented, and content-oriented. Study Figure 9.2 to determine which best describes you as a listener.

Figure 9.2 Four Listening Styles

Action-Oriented Listeners:

- want to get their messages quickly and to-the-point
- do not like fluff and grow impatient when they perceive people to be "wasting their time"
- become frustrated when information is not orderly
- are quick to dismiss people who "ramble" and falter when they speak

Time-Oriented Listeners:

- want their information in brief, concise meetings
- are consumed with how much time is taken to convey a message
- set time limits for listening (and communicating in general)
- will ask people to "move the message along" if they feel it is taking too long

People-Oriented Listeners:

- are in contrast to time- and action-oriented listeners
- view listening as a chance to connect with other people
- enjoy listening to people so that relationships can be built
- become emotionally involved with the person communicating

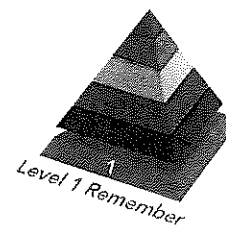
Content-Oriented Listeners:

- enjoy an intellectual challenge
- like to listen to technical information, facts, and evidence
- enjoy complex information that must be deciphered and filtered
- carefully evaluate information and facts before forming an opinion
- enjoy asking questions

Which style best describes you? _____

What are the "pros" of being this type of listener? _____

What are the "cons" of being this type of listener? _____



LISTENING CAN BE SO HARD

Can the Obstacles to Listening Be Overcome?

Several major obstacles stand in the way of becoming an effective listener. To begin building active listening skills, you first have to remove some barriers.

Obstacle One: Prejudging

Prejudging means that you automatically shut out what is being said, and it is one of the biggest obstacles to active listening. You may prejudice because you don't like or agree with the information or the person communicating. You may also have prejudging problems because of your environment, culture, social status, or attitude.

Do You Prejudge Information or Its Source?

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I tune out when something is boring. | Yes | No |
| 2. I tune out when I do not agree with the information. | Yes | No |
| 3. I argue mentally with the speaker about information. | Yes | No |
| 4. I do not listen to people I do not like. | Yes | No |
| 5. I make decisions about information before I understand all of its implications or consequences. | Yes | No |

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you tend to prejudge in a listening situation.

Tips for Overcoming Prejudging

- Listen for information that may be valuable to you as a student. Some material may not be pleasant to hear but may be useful to you later on.
- Listen to the message, not the messenger. If you do not like the speaker, try to go beyond personality and listen to what is being said, without regard to the person saying it.

Conversely, you may like the speaker so much that you automatically accept the material or answers without listening objectively to what is being said.

- Try to remove cultural, racial, gender, social, and environmental barriers. Just because a person is different from you or holds a different point of view does not make that person wrong; and just because a person is like you and holds a similar point of view does not make that person right. Sometimes, you have to cross cultural and environmental barriers to learn new material and see with brighter eyes

Obstacle Two: Talking

Not even the best listener in the world can listen while he or she is talking. The next time you are in a conversation with a friend, try speaking while your friend is speaking—then see if you know what your friend said. To become an effective listener, you need to learn the power of silence. Silence gives you the opportunity to think about what is being said before you respond. The first rule of listening is: stop talking. The second rule of listening is: stop talking. And you guessed it—the third rule of listening is: stop talking.

Are You a Talker Rather Than a Listener?

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I often interrupt the speaker so that I can say what I want. | Yes | No |
| 2. I am thinking of my next statement while others are talking. | Yes | No |
| 3. My mind wanders when others talk. | Yes | No |
| 4. I answer my own questions. | Yes | No |
| 5. I answer questions that are asked of other people. | Yes | No |

If you answered yes to two or more questions, you tend to talk too much in a listening situation

Tips for Overcoming the Urge to Talk Too Much

- Avoid interrupting the speaker. Force yourself to be silent at parties, family gatherings, and friendly get-togethers. You should not be unsociable, but force yourself to be silent for 10 minutes. You'll be surprised at what you hear. You may also be surprised how hard it is to do this. Test yourself.
- Ask someone a question and then allow that person to answer the question.
- Too often we ask questions and answer them ourselves. Force yourself to wait until the person has formulated a response. If you ask questions and wait for answers, you will force yourself to listen.
- Concentrate on what is being said at the moment, not what you want to say next.

Obstacle Three: Becoming Too Emotional

Emotions can form a strong barrier to active listening. Worries, problems, fears, and anger can keep you from listening to the greatest advantage. Have you ever sat in a lecture, and before you knew what was happening your mind was a million miles away because you were angry or worried about something? If you have, you know what it's like to bring your emotions to the table.

Do You Bring Your Emotions to the Listening Situation?

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I get angry before I hear the whole story. | Yes | No |
| 2. I look for underlying or hidden messages in information. | Yes | No |
| 3. Sometimes, I begin listening on a negative note. | Yes | No |
| 4. I base my opinions of information on what others are saying or doing. | Yes | No |
| 5. I readily accept information as correct from people whom I like or respect. | Yes | No |

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you tend to bring your emotions to a listening situation.

Tips for Overcoming Emotions

- Know how you feel before you begin the listening experience. Take stock of your emotions and feelings ahead of time.
- Focus on the message; determine how to use the information.
- Create a positive image about the message you are hearing.
- Avoid overreacting and jumping to conclusions.

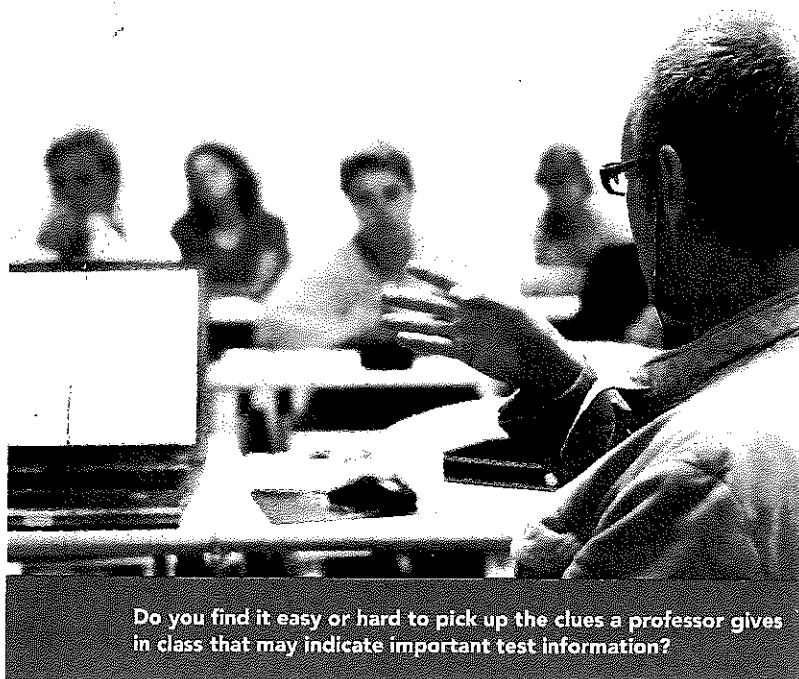
LISTENING FOR KEY WORDS, PHRASES, AND HINTS

Do Professors Really Offer Test Clues in Their Lectures?

Learning how to listen for key words, phrases, and hints can help you become an active listener and an effective note-taker. For example, if your English instructor begins a lecture saying, "There are 10 basic elements to writing poetry," jot down the number 10 under the heading "Poetry" or number your notebook page 1 through 10, leaving space for notes. If at the end of class you listed six elements to writing poetry, you know that you missed a part of the lecture. At this point, you need to ask the instructor some questions.

Here are some key phrases and words to listen for:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| in addition to | another way | above all |
| most important | such as | specifically |
| you'll see this again | therefore | finally |
| for example | to illustrate | as stated earlier |
| in contrast | in comparison | nevertheless |
| the characteristics of | the main issue is | moreover |
| on the other hand | as a result of | because |



Do you find it easy or hard to pick up the clues a professor gives in class that may indicate important test information?

DID YOU *Know?*



THE INTERNATIONALLY famous performer Lady Gaga states that she was very studious and disciplined when attending a private, all-girls, Roman

Catholic school, The Convent of the Sacred Heart. Gaga was the daughter of a hard-working, lower-class family. She described herself as "insecure" and shares that she was made fun of by her classmates. She said she never fit in and felt that she was a freak. Even then singing topped her list of important things in her life.

Gaga loved music from an early age, writing her first song at age 13. She had lead roles in high school productions. After high school, she attended a musical theatre conservatory at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She withdrew from school during her second semester to focus on her musical career. Her father agreed to pay her rent for one year if she agreed to re-enroll at Tisch if she was not successfully established in her career. She struggled to pay her bills and buy groceries.

Gaga was signed to Def Jam in September 2006 only to be dropped by the label after three months. She was devastated and returned to her family's home, where she began experimenting with go-go dancing and burlesque outfits, as well as experimenting with drugs, to her family's dismay. She later moved away from drugs, still concentrating on her music. In 2009, *Just Dance*, her lead single on a new album hit the international charts. Her song, *Poker Face*, followed and earned her Best Dance Recording at the 52nd Grammy Awards. Since then, Gaga has become an internationally famous performer and recording artist who is known for her bizarre outfits and great talent.

Picking up on **transition words** such as these will help you filter out less important information and thus listen more carefully to what is most important. There are other indicators of important information, too. You will want to listen carefully when the instructor:

- Writes something on the board
- Uses a PowerPoint presentation
- Uses computer-aided graphics
- Speaks in a louder tone or changes vocal patterns
- Uses gestures more than usual
- Uses any visual aids

TAKING EFFECTIVE NOTES

Is It Just a Big, Crazy Chore?

Go to class, listen, and write it down. Read a text and take notes. Watch a film and write down a summary of what you saw. Is it really that important? Actually, knowing how to take useful, accurate notes can dramatically improve your life as a student. If you are an effective listener and note-taker, you have two of the most valuable skills any student could ever use. There are several reasons why it is important to take notes:

- You become an active part of the listening process.
- You create a history of your course content when you take notes.
- You have written criteria to follow when studying.
- You create a visual aid for your material.
- Studying becomes much easier.
- You retain information at a greater rate than non-note-takers.
- Effective note-takers average higher grades than non-note-takers (Kiewra & Fletcher, 1984).

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

Can You Write It Right?

You have already learned several skills you will need to take notes, such as cultivating your active listening skills, overcoming obstacles to effective listening, and familiarizing yourself with key phrases used by instructors. Next, prepare yourself mentally and physically to take effective notes that are going to be helpful to you. Consider the following ideas as you think about expanding your note-taking abilities.

- **Physically and mentally attend class.** This refers to in the classroom and online instruction. This may sound like stating the obvious, but it is surprising how many students feel they do not need to do anything to learn.
- **Come to class prepared.** Scan, read, and use your textbook to establish a basic understanding of the material before coming to class. It is always easier to take notes when