



Guidelines for Better Communication

Tips for a good listening environment:

1. Decrease background noise whenever possible.
2. Good lighting.
3. Encourage groups to sit closer to the speaker and to each other.
4. Check with facilities to see if they offer assistive listening devices.
5. Consider adding carpeting, rugs, draperies, etc. to reduce reverberation.

Tips for the Speaker:

1. Speak slowly and clearly but do not exaggerate. Don't shout; it distorts the sounds.
2. Face to face communication is the easiest. Don't call someone from another room; move closer to the listener and get their attention before speaking.
3. Continue to face the listener while speaking; don't turn away.
4. Don't speak while chewing gum, eating, or smoking.
5. Keep in mind that beards and moustaches can interfere with a listener's understanding.
6. Repeat or rephrase information if the listener appears to have misunderstood.
7. Give important information to the listener in writing to be used later as a reference.
8. In a group situation, repeat questions or comments before responding.
9. If someone joins a conversation in progress, give the newcomer a short summary of the topic before proceeding with your discussion.

Tips for the Listener:

1. Watch the speaker to observe lips, face and whole-body expressions.
2. Don't strain to understand each word. Speech is often redundant. Relax and remain attentive; you can generally follow the context of what is said and fill in words you may have missed.
3. If you use them, wear your glasses.
4. Become familiar with the topic of presentations. Request an outline ahead of time and read movie reviews before seeing them. Stay current with news and events.
5. Request that friends get in the habit of giving you a brief clue as to the topic when you join a conversation already in progress.
6. Do not nod as if you understand when you don't.
7. If you miss something or don't understand what the speaker has said, ask pointed questions so that the speaker can fill in the part you missed rather than having to repeat the entire statement. For instance, if someone asks you to meet them for lunch at the cafeteria on Wednesday, and you were not sure which day they said, ask them "which day did you want to meet for lunch?" rather than saying "what?"