

Two ears and one mouth!

We often find that we do twice as much talking as we do listening. However, since we have two ears and one mouth, we should do twice as much listening as we do talking. Listening is an important soft skill which can greatly improve the relationships we have with our customers.

What makes a good listener?

Pays attention to what the other person is saying

Paraphrases what was just heard

Makes eye contact with the person who is speaking

Focuses on what the other person is saying

How can listening skills be improved?

- Listen carefully so that you will be able to understand, comprehend, and evaluate. Careful listening will require a conscious effort on your part. You must be aware of the verbal and nonverbal messages (reading between the lines).
- Be mentally and physically prepared to listen. Put other thoughts out of your mind. Your attention will be diverted from listening if you try to think of answers in advance.
- You can't hear if YOU do all the talking. Don't talk too much.
- Think about the topic in advance, if possible. Be prepared to listen.
- Listen with empathy. See the situation from the other's point of view. Try to put yourself in their shoes.
- Be courteous; don't interrupt. Take notes if you worry about forgetting a particular point.
- Avoid stereotyping individuals by making assumptions about how you expect them to act.
- Listen to how something is said. Be alert for what is left unsaid.
- Make certain everyone involved gets an opportunity to voice their opinions. Don't let one person dominate the conversation.
- Face those you are talking with, lean slightly forward, and make eye contact. Use body to show your interest, concern.

The next time you're having a conversation with your customers, listen twice as much as you talk and you'll find out more than you thought you could!