

4.6 SHARPEN LISTENING SKILLS

What to Know

Listening to the interviewer is as essential as talking honestly and openly about your skills and abilities. Concentrate on what is being said and how it is said, rather than on how you are doing. By listening to the interviewer's statements, comments, and questions, you can get a better understanding of the organization and what it would be like to work there. Moreover, in some interview situations, especially managerial interviews, you will be evaluated on your listening skills.

The phrase *listening skills* sometimes surprises people because most people view listening as a natural process rather than a skill. People with this opinion unfortunately have confused the word hearing (a passive activity) with listening (an intentional act that requires skill). Following are some techniques and guidelines that you can use to become a better listener.

What to Do

1. If distractions are a problem in an interview, you can control them in the following ways:
 - If the distraction is external, control it by focusing your concentration.
 - If the distraction is internal (inside your head), control it by reminding yourself to pay attention and try to relax.
2. Paraphrase the interviewer's comments by restating the main idea or content to:
 - check and clarify accuracy;
 - let the interviewer know you understand; and
 - encourage more discussion.
3. Focus on key words, main ideas, and examples to help you retain important points.
4. Ask questions if you do not understand what the interviewer is saying or asking. Do not pretend to understand if you do not understand.
5. Take notes only if it will not distract you from the conversation. Write them in a list or outline form. Always ask the interviewer's permission before taking notes.
6. Make sure you understand what you are being asked.