

## ***Are You an Active Listener?***

*Score yourself on the 25 active listening skills that follow.*

*If you usually practice the skill in question, score yourself with a "2".*

*If you sometimes practice the skill in question, score yourself with a "1".*

*If you seldom practise the skill, give yourself a "0".*

*Be honest with yourself – no one is looking over your shoulder.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Before I begin a sensitive discussion, I make at least some "clearing-the-decks" gesture, such as removing the papers I'm working on from my desk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If I expect the conversation to be lengthy, I offer coffee or water to my discussion partner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I sit in close proximity to the speaker and directly face him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I listen for subtle changes in inflection and tone of voice in an effort to understand the speaker's feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I gaze at my partner during discussion, but avoid impersonal or "cold" staring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I don't offer opinions or judgments on the issues at hand, at least until the discussion is over.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I use gestures of understanding – like nods of the head – when my partner makes points that seem important.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I don't succumb to distractions, such as ringing telephones or activity in the hallway, while listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I maintain a relaxed posture during the conversation, regardless of the content of the discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Although I might jot down an occasional word or phrase, I avoid writing extensive notes during the conversation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I restate the speaker's key thoughts in my own words from time to time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I ask questions to clarify facts and understand the feelings of the speaker.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I avoid expression irritation at any poor speech patterns or hesitancy the speaker might exhibit.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I use the speaker's name occasionally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I let the speaker "get off the topic" during a sensitive discussion if he or she wishes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I listen carefully for signs of emotion in the speaker's voice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. My demeanour appropriately complements the speaker's demeanour; for instance, if the speaker is upset, my posture and gestures are reassuring
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I resist the temptation to finish the speaker's sentences or draw out conclusions before he or she offers them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I speak slowly and in a relaxed manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I avoid distracting gestures, like looking at my watch or at papers piled up on a nearby table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I acknowledge the speaker's feelings and thank him or her for sharing them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. If the speaker asks me a question, I answer simply, directly and non-judgmentally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I'm not afraid to say, "I don't know," if I can't offer a firm answer to a problem or question.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I periodically ask the speaker if I'm understanding his or her message properly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I help the speaker bring closure to the conversation by forging mutual conclusions or observations.

*Now, give yourself a score by totaling the numerical value of all your answers. If your total score is 40 or above, congratulations! You're a good conversation partner and practice active listening skills quite effectively.*

*If your total score is between 30 and 39, you're probably familiar with active listening techniques – and you may well use them – but additional practice of these all-important communication skills won't hurt.*

*If your total score is below 30, don't fret. You can increase your awareness of communication techniques, as well as your ability to be an effective listener.*