

# LISTENING

A PROGRAMMED  
APPROACH

SECOND EDITION

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ELLA A. ERWAY



# **LISTENING**

## **A PROGRAMMED APPROACH**

**Second Edition**

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## **LISTENING: A PROGRAMMED APPROACH**

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# PREFACE

Oral messages come to us so often in our daily lives that we believe we are quite efficient in processing the information. In the following pages you will have an opportunity to discover and analyze your own listening behavior.

This is a self-instructional program and you will be teaching yourself. Answers are provided so that you can compare your responses with those of the 160 students who participated in the development of the materials. You may be right and they may be wrong, but at least you can check on your processing of the spoken word.

I want to express my appreciation to all of those who helped in developing these materials: Mrs. Theresa M. Kozak and her students at Southern Connecticut State College, Mrs. Joyce D. Hirschhorn and her students at South Central Community College in New Haven, Connecticut, Mr. Peter Boppert and Mrs. Joyce Prozano, Carolyn Stanworth who faithfully typed and edited, Don Burden of McGraw-Hill, the members of the Erway family, and the many colleagues and students who have made helpful comments on the first edition. Also my thanks are extended to the staff of *Vital Speeches of the Day* for their cooperation in permitting the use of the text of the speeches for this program.

Ella A. Erway

### **Ten Bad Listening Habits**

1. Premature dismissal of the subject as uninteresting.
2. Criticizing delivery and physical appearance.
3. Getting overstimulated by some point in the speech.
4. "I Get the Facts" listening.
5. Trying to outline everything.
6. Faking attention.
7. Yielding easily to distractions.
8. Avoiding difficult listening.
9. Letting emotional words arouse personal antagonism.
10. Wasting the advantage of thought speed.

### **Ten Guides to Effective Listening**

1. Find areas of interest.
2. Judge content, not delivery.
3. Hold your fire.
4. Listen for ideas.
5. Be flexible.
6. Work at listening.
7. Resist distractions.
8. Exercise your mind.
9. Keep your mind open.
10. Capitalize on thought speed.

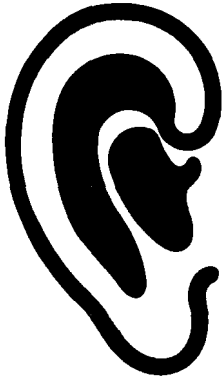
Ralph A. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, *Are You Listening?* McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1957.

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## PROGRAM ONE

# Introduction to Listening as Message Reception



Before you were born, you were receiving and processing messages. Sudden noises startled you and you recognized differences in the auditory field around you. By the time you were twelve months old you could determine the source of a spoken message as well as the elements of the meaning that were related to your experience. You could decode "No" as a general signal to stop whatever it was that you were doing—at least for a moment. No one gave you listening lessons for half an hour each day because you were constantly figuring out for yourself how to decode the booming, buzzing confusion of voices around you. As you grew older, your

parents complained that you "didn't listen." Of course, they were talking about more than a failure to decode the message; they were talking about your response or feedback to the message. When you followed the commands, you were listening. When you disobeyed, you may not have decoded the information *or* you may have decided to ignore the admonition.

The reception of a spoken message involves many variables. As a preface to this program you see ten guides to effective listening. Dr. Nichols summarized factors that affect your success in message reception. In the first tape you will experiment with behaviors that affect listening. In future programs you will focus on developing specific skills.

The first and most obvious variable in message reception is the content of the message, including subject, organization, supporting and illustrative materials, and word choice. Another variable is the speaker of the message, whom you may like or dislike. A third factor is the style of speaking, be it fast or slow, loud or soft. In addition, you, as the receiver of the message, may have extensive or limited experience as a basis for interpretation of the content.

You also approach each message with a set of expectations which influence your response. You listen eagerly for the weather affecting a projected trip but may be neutral in the classroom. Another variable is the medium of the message. As you read these words you do not have the added information of vocal inflection or stress on words. In normal conversation or public communication settings you read the facial expression and body language of the speaker. In this program you will be listening to an audio (rather than video) tape which will affect your listening response.

## **2 Listening: A Programmed Approach**

Many research studies indicate that listening skills can be improved. Since most of the information received by the average person is from the spoken message, increased skill in processing can improve our efficiency. However, such skill does not come from simple practice nor does the evidence indicate that improved listening is a factor of superior intelligence. We have all had years of practice in listening but few people have consciously examined their listening behaviors or learned to consciously direct response behavior. The skills you will practice in this program are to a great extent "common sense" behaviors. The program makes you aware of what you are doing in a sequence that moves from easy listening experiences to more difficult activities.

The activities in this program require a response. The answers are given after each set of questions either on the tape or in the workbook. As you move through the program, use a card or piece of paper to cover answers until you have completed your responses.

The first examples on the tape are selections for response and analysis. You will alternate between the tape and the workbook.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

Listen to Sample One until the speaker finishes. Then turn to the first speech sample and check your reaction.



What is your reaction to each of the following speeches?

### SAMPLE ONE

Speech by Gus Tuberville, President of Emerson College. Delivered at Emerson College, Boston, Massachusetts, November 1, 1975.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Interested—paid close attention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some interest—understood it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not interested—understood it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not interested—could not follow it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Listen to Sample Two. Do not write until the speaker finishes.

Turn on the tape recorder.

### SAMPLE TWO

Speech by Harvey C. Jacobs, Editor of the *Indianapolis News*. Delivered at commencement, Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana, May 25, 1974.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Interested—paid close attention
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some interest—understood it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not interested—understood it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not interested—could not follow it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

List variables that caused your differing responses to each message.

\_\_\_\_\_

Check your answers.

#### 4 Listening: A Programmed Approach

### ANSWERS

There were no right answers in your reactions. You were practicing the first behavior of effective listening: becoming aware of your response rather than processing automatically. Your attitude or feeling about speakers or their views is part of your success in accurate reception. That attitude includes your pre-set or purpose in listening. You may listen to be entertained or your purpose may be to gain information. Sometimes you listen just to be polite or because you are talking to a person who is more powerful in society than you are. Occasionally you are concerned with a critical analysis of the message. You establish a pre-set of attitudes before you listen.

Before you turn on the tape recorder for Sample Three, mark the pre-set you have for listening to a section of a speech originally given by Andrei Gromyko, the Russian Foreign Minister.

### SAMPLE THREE

Speech by Andrei A. Gromyko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Soviet Socialist Republic. Delivered before the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, September 25, 1973.

Write your answer before listening to Sample Three.  
What do you expect?

Excerpt from speech by Andrei A. Gromyko.

\_\_\_\_\_ Gather information

\_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate and criticize

\_\_\_\_\_ Be entertained

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Don't know what to expect

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

Then underline your response in the following sentence.

As I listened, I      changed      my purpose.  
                         did not change

If you changed, what was your new purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE FOUR

The next listening sample is a bit of ragtime music from the "Maple Leaf Rag," by Scott Joplin.

Mark your pre-set.

My purpose or pre-set in listening is to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gather information
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate and criticize
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be entertained
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know what to expect

Listen until the sample ends.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

Then underline your response in the following sentence.

As I listened, I      changed      my purpose.  
                         did not change

If you changed, what was your new purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

**Check your answers.**

## ANSWERS

Again there are no right answers. You choose the purpose according to the relevance of the message. Some listeners are not entertained by ragtime; some are critical of every Russian statement.

As you receive a message there are limits on the amount of information you can process at one time. The neurological system of your body has filters for blocking out information as well as an activating mechanism to select and organize the incoming stimuli. The sensory receptors of the ear operate to scan the environment for danger while you are asleep. An unusual noise, even though it is not very loud, will awaken you. You hear your own name as part of a conversation across the room, though you are not paying attention. You reject a message that is too difficult or presents a density of stimuli beyond your capacity to organize and understand; you stop listening.

## **6 Listening: A Programmed Approach**

In the next section you will hear a spoken message. Consciously focus your attention to gain information so that you can answer questions on the content in spite of distractions.

Listen to Sample Five. Write your answers.

Turn on the tape recorder.

### **SAMPLE FIVE**

Speech by Joel F. Henning, Staff Director of the American Bar Association. Delivered before the 1973 Annual Convention of National Organizations on Legal Problems of Education, November 8, 1973.

In Sample Five Joel Henning suggested that a serious problem exists among the citizens of the United States. What is the current problem?

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Which characteristics of this message made it easy or difficult to listen to?

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Check your answers.

### **ANSWERS**

You may have included the variables of subject matter or content, vocabulary, and sentence length. You may have listed voice qualities.

The answer to the question is:

Apathy, particularly in voting, is the result of the educational system.

When you focus attention to answer a specific question, you will usually find the answer. However, you may fail to note other information because of the limits on the amount you can receive at one time.

You have just focused on a meaningful message. In the next excerpt you will select meaningless material as an illustration of the control you can exercise.

## **SAMPLE SIX**

Speech by C. F. Kleber, Senior Vice President of Grey Advertising. Delivered to the ADcraft Club, May 4, 1973.

As you listen to Sample Six make a tally mark (/) each time you hear the word "the."

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

**Check your answer.**

## **ANSWER**

If you heard them all (there were fourteen), you have unusual ability to focus attention. Fortunately, we are seldom asked to focus on the little words (called function words by linguists). These words serve to keep the rhythm of spoken language so that thought-carrying words can receive stress.

You will now hear part of another speech with the words "a" and "the" omitted. The language will sound awkward but you will have no difficulty in getting the meaning.

## **SAMPLE SEVEN**

Speech by Tom Dillion, Chairman of the Board of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn. Delivered before a meeting of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn executives, New York, July 1, 1976.

Listen to Sample Seven. You do not have to write an answer.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

## SAMPLE EIGHT

Listen to the sounds in Sample Eight. The answers are on the tape.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

Identify each of the sounds you hear.

Sound 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Sound 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Sound 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Sound 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Psychologists believe that all stimuli on which you focus attention are stored at least for a short time in the memory bank of the mind. The problem is in retrieval or remembering. It is particularly difficult to store information when it comes to you rapidly. In the next exercise it is important to remember the details long enough to write them down. When this kind of information is presented do not try to listen for the whole message but focus on each part separately. Take notes.



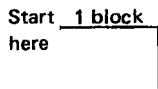
## SAMPLE NINE

Listen to Sample Nine.

Turn on the tape recorder.

Draw a map of the directions you hear on the tape. The first step is done for you. Take notes as you listen.

Start 1 block  
here

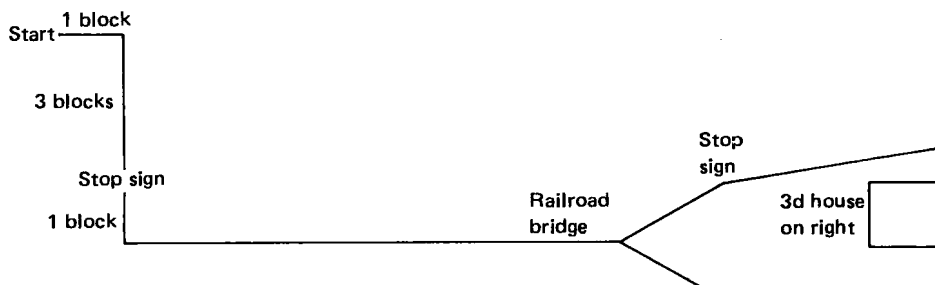


Turn off the tape recorder and finish the map.

Check your answer.

### ANSWER

Your map should look something like this.



As you listened you started the map or took notes. With the notes you could retrieve the rest of the information to complete the details. The next activity requires you to process information as it is presented.

Check your answers.

## SAMPLE TEN

Use space below for your computations. Attempt to have the answer as soon as the speaker finishes. Do not write the steps you can do in your head.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Check your answer.**

### ANSWER

As long as you could use the paper you probably were able to come up with the correct answer of 6.

In the next section, test your short-term memory *without writing* until you have heard the whole message.

## SAMPLE ELEVEN

Listen to the whole message before you write.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

1. Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_
2. Word spelling \_\_\_\_\_
3. Grocery list \_\_\_\_\_

## REVIEW

You have been examining your ability to identify parts of a message. Each time you held the whole message in memory so you could compare and identify important details.

In Sample Eleven you found that processing of spoken information into your memory is easier if there is a pattern of organization. In the next message, you will hear a long list of names which fall into three categories of currently well-known personalities.

## SAMPLE TWELVE

Do not write until you have heard the complete list. Then try to recall as many as possible.

**Turn on the tape recorder.**

**Politicians**

**TV personalities  
(not musicians)**

**Musicians**

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Listen to the tape.

**Check your answers.**

## ANSWERS

One way to organize is to put names in categories as you did in the last message. You were able to remember close to twelve names because of the groupings. When we talk about organizing a speech for public communication, we are saying that ideas should be arranged in a classification pattern. You can also process and remember ideas by comparison. You make a mental index.