



# Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

## Communication Tips

### Say What?

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We spend...

45% of our time

listening 30% of our

time talking 16% of our

time reading 9% of our

time writing

We spend the majority of our time listening, but we receive the majority of our training in reading, writing and public speaking- not listening! And some studies show that we aren't doing a great job of listening. They indicate we only retain 10% of what we hear.

One of our difficulties in retaining information is that people can think far faster than people can talk. A person speaks at a rate of 100-150 words/minute. A person thinks at a rate of 600- 800 words/minute. This allows our mind to wander rather than focusing on the speaker.

So, what can we do to improve our listening skills?

Stop talking- Believe it or not, you can't do a good listening job while you're talking.

Be attentive- Sit where you can directly see the person speaking and he/she can see you. Make periodic eye contact to show you're alive and interested. Periodically, sit up straight and take a couple of deep breaths.

Remove distractions...

- from within: Don't daydream or rehearse what you are going to say next;
- from the outside environment: Close the door. Shut off the fan;
- from the speaker: Ignore the piece of lunch stuck between his/her teeth.

Listen for ideas, rather than facts- If it's a long meeting or conversation, jot down ideas in brief notes. Also, jot down any questions that enter your mind and then ask them!

Pay attention to non-verbal clues- It will keep you alert and also increase your understanding.



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Physically react- Nod, smile, shake your head in agreement or disagreement, say “mm-hm” or “that’s right” in support of what the person said that you like.

Don’t judge- Don’t argue mentally with what’s being said. You’re trying to understand the other person’s point of view, not reinforce your own bias. Listening is not possible until you’re willing to open yourself up to the other person and permit him/her to have his/her own views.

Reflect- Summarize back to the speaker, in your own words, what you feel the key points were that he/she made. Feedback allows you a check to make sure you heard him/her correctly.

These eight tips are offered as challenges to improving your listening skills. Each of us that accepts the challenge can assist our clubs and councils in being...

...a comfortable environment for sharing;

...a stimulating arena for idea exchange; and

...an accurate source of information and feedback to those we represent.