

Eight Types of Listening Responses

Creating strong relationships with students is an important aspect of being a powerful educator and the way in which educators listen can assist in creating those strong bonds with students. Below is a list of eight listening responses educators can use when interacting with students.

1. *Silent Listening*



Providing positive nonverbal responses without verbal feedback. Allow students to vent and “get it all out.” Sometimes students simply need to be heard without the threat of being interrupted and judged.

2. *Questioning*



Occurs when the listener asks the speaker for additional information. Some questions are sincere, that is, aimed at understanding others, whereas counterfeit questions are disguised attempts to send a message rather than receive one. As educators, sincere questions can let students know that you are interested in what they have to say. It can also be a method for allowing students to come up with solutions on their own, as it is a great way to lead them to the answer instead of providing one for them.... Empowerment!

3. *Paraphrasing*



Providing feedback that restates the message the speaker sent. This is an effective way to reduce confusion and ensure that an educator understands the student’s perspective and point of view. It can include:

- Putting the speaker’s words into your own
- Offering an example
- Reflecting the underlying theme

4. *Empathizing*



A response style used to show that the listener is identifying with the speaker. Empathy involves perspective taking, emotional contagion, and having a genuine concern for the student. It can include brief statements such as: “*I see,*” “*Wow!,*” “*My goodness.*” It can also include statements such as:

- “*I can imagine how tough that would be to handle.*”
- “*It is really no fun to feel unappreciated.*”
- “*This really means a lot to you, doesn’t it?*”

5. *Supporting*



A type of response that reveals the listener’s solidarity with the speaker and reflects the listener's feelings about the speaker. It can let a student know that you are on their side and consist of the following types:

- **Agreement:** “*Yeah, that class was tough for me too.*”
- **Offers to Help:** “*I am here for you if you want to talk about it.*”
- **Praise:** “*You are such a hard worker.*”
- **Reassurance:** “*I know you’ll do a great job.*”
- **Diversion:** “*That reminds me of a time we...*”

6. Analyzing



Occurs when the listener offers an interpretation of the speaker's message ("I think what's really bothering you is..."). Providing interpretations are often effective in helping a student see things from other perspectives. It can also clarify a confusing problem, providing an objective understanding of the situation, which can lead to a solution. However, analysis can create more problems than it solves, so to make sure that your feedback is helpful there are a few guidelines:

- Offer your interpretation in a tentative way rather than as absolute fact.
- Your analysis ought to have reasonable chance of being correct.
- Make sure that the other person will be receptive to your analysis.
- Be sure that your motive for offering an analysis is truly to help them.

7. Evaluating



A response in which the listener appraises the speaker's thoughts or behaviors. The evaluation may be favorable ("You are doing an awesome job") or unfavorable ("An attitude like that won't get you anywhere"). When communicating with students it is important to be cautious of unfavorable evaluations as they may arouse defensiveness and threaten the self-concept of the student.

8. Advising



Responding by offering guidance or providing suggestions for dealing with the speaker's problem. Advice may be helpful or harmful. Although advice may be just what a student needs in certain cases, there are several reasons why it may not be helpful in other situations. First, you may not be offering them the best suggestion. Second, the position of "advice recipient" is a potentially unwelcome identity because it implies that the advice giver may be superior and that somehow the receiver is at fault. Lastly, people often don't want advice and instead may simply need to talk out their thoughts and feelings. When providing advice consider the following when trying to help students:

- ***Is the advice needed?*** If a person has already taken a course of action, giving advice after the fact is rarely appreciated.
- ***Is the advice wanted?*** People generally do not value unsolicited advice.
- ***Is the advice given in the right sequence?*** Advice is more likely to be received after the listener first offers empathizing, paraphrasing, questioning, and supporting responses.
- ***Is the advice coming from an expert?*** If you want to offer advice about anything, it's important to have experience and success in those matters.

Adler, R. B., Rosenfeld, L. B., & Proctor, R. F. (2015). *Interplay: The process of interpersonal communication* (13th Edition.). New York: Oxford University Press.



Phone: (888) 886-8657

Email: KLS@kalonjisaterfield.com

