

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

. . . on Listening Skills in School

By Bill Welker, EdD

Parents, your children are involved with listening almost every waking moment of the day. Furthermore, good listening skills in school are especially important during lectures, recitations and discussions. Below are the basic differences between these various speaking situations:

Lectures

The lecture method consists of the instructor giving all the information with no student involvement other than listening.

Recitations

The recitation method consists of the instructor asking questions, with the students answering them.

Discussions

The discussion method consists of both the instructor and students asking questions of each other. Moreover, the students also interact or discuss the topic with their classmates.

Take note: many students are poor listeners because they do not “focus” their attention on what is being said during class. As a matter of fact, most students operate on a 25-percent level of efficiency when they listen to a 10-minute talk. And the longer the talk lasts, even less is comprehended or remembered by the students.

In reality, learning how to listen properly in the classroom environment is a difficult mental process. It concerns a lot of concentration on the part of the students. And it is such an important skill to learn because listening is their primary source of language, whether it be in the classroom, on the street, at the movies, and on the television, radio, and computer. In essence, it is not only important for their success in school, but also for their potential to succeed in life.

The Listening Checklist

A good listening checklist provides a guide for students to develop better listening habits in the classroom. The following are questions they should ask themselves regarding important listening situations, especially in the academic setting.

1. Did I remember to get ready for listening?

- * Was I seated comfortably where I could see and hear?**
- * Were my eyes focused on the instructor?**

2. Was my mind ready to concentrate on what the instructor had to say?

- * Was I able to push other thoughts out of my mind for the time being?**
- * Was I ready to think about the topic and call to mind the things I already knew about it? (Prior Knowledge)**
- * Was I ready to learn more about the topic?**

3. Was I ready for “take-off?”

- * Did I discover in the first few minutes where the instructor was taking me?**
- * Did I discover his/her central idea so that I could follow it throughout the speech?**

4. Was I able to pick out the ideas that supported the central idea?

*** Did I take advantage of the instructor's clues (such as first, next, etc.) to help organize the ideas in my mind?**

*** Did I use extra "think" time to summarize and take notes – both mentally and on paper?**

5. After the instructor was finished and the facts were all in, did I evaluate what had been said?

*** Did this new knowledge seem to fit into the knowledge I already had?**

*** Did I weigh each idea to see if I agreed with the instructor?**

A conscious awareness of such checklist questions will help students to focus on listening to lectures, recitations, and discussions. Also, research has demonstrated that by improving listening skills, students indirectly improve their reading comprehension skills. And that will definitely help them during their textbook readings as well.

What a deal!

Parent Proverb

"Genius begins great works; labor alone finishes them."

- Joseph Joubert

Next Month's Column: "Your Child's Reading Comprehension"

(Editor's Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He was selected as a "Teacher of the Year" by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. Most recently, Dr. Welker learned he will be inducted into the West Virginia University College of Education and Human Services' *Jasper N. Deahl Honors Society* for career achievement and community involvement. His e-mail is mattalkwv@hotmail.com.)