

Quick Guide: Listening when Interviewing

Last month we looked at different types of questions you can ask when interviewing. Key to questioning is that you listen to the answers; it is one of the essential abilities of an interviewer. If you appear to be listening, your interviewee will be encouraged to keep talking. By planning your questions and then listening more actively during the interview you will stand a much better chance of selecting the correct person to join your company. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you listen better.

- 1. You have two ears and one mouth** – so listen at least twice as much as you talk. You should aim for a ratio of you listening to speaking at about 60-70 : 40-30%.
- 2. Focus solely on what the speaker is saying.** Try not to think about what you are going to say next, as you will lose focus on what is being said. If you have planned your questions and are familiar with the application you do not need to worry about what is coming next.
- 3. Listen with an open mind,** parking prejudgements or bias, and instead acknowledging to yourself the positive content and intent of the conversation.
- 4. Listen to the emotion behind the words.** The tone in which they answer or changes in their body language will tell you much more than the words alone.
- 5. Minimise distractions.** Have only what you need in front of you.
- 6. Summarise** what an interviewee is saying to show that you are listening. Paraphrase the information to check that you have the correct understanding.
- 7. Try not to interrupt** although sometimes it is necessary if the interviewee gives too much or unnecessary information. Guide the interview to the topic you want to discuss by linking something they have said onto your next question.
- 8. Maintain eye contact and use your whole body to listen!** All of these will send "I'm listening" signals: sit in a more relaxed and open way, tilt your head to one side, nod your head appropriately and use listening noises like 'uh-huh' or 'mmm' to encourage your speaker. Beware of negative body language, particularly if they have given wrong information or said something that is unhelpful to the interview.
- 9. Use silence tactically** during an interview. Do not prolong it so your interviewee feels uncomfortable, but let it run whenever a candidate is searching for words or thinking about an answer. Notice their response to silence – do they rush to fill the vacuum with hasty answers or do they have the confidence to take the time they need to frame a coherent answer to a difficult or complicated question.
- 10. Show some empathy** towards the interviewee who may be nervous. Create a more relaxed environment to ensure you get the best out of your interviewee.

Related Course(s): [Effective interview Skills](#)

Compiled by Judith Di-Castri