



10-Minute Supervisor Trainings

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

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EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Effective listening is a practice that can help everyone, not just conservation district supervisors, get a more beneficial experience from a conversation. This practice can help everyone communicate more clearly in their everyday lives.

Effective listeners use more than just their ears. They engage their whole selves into listening and understanding the discussion. In order to be an effective listener, follow these 10 steps:

- 1. Stop talking** - Don't talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying. Do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them.
- 2. Prepare yourself to listen** - Relax. Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind.
- 3. Put the speaker at ease** - Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact.
- 4. Remove distractions** - Don't doodle, shuffle papers, look out the window, pick your fingernails or similar.
- 5. Empathize** – Try to see things from the speaker's point of view.
- 6. Be patient** – Don't try to fill in pauses. Instead let the speaker continue in their own time.
- 7. Avoid personal prejudice** – Try to be impartial. Focus on what's being said instead of the style of delivery.
- 8. Listen to the tone** – The speakers volume and tone will likely add to what they are saying.
- 9. Listen for ideas, not just words** – Try to understand how what the speaker is saying fits together.
- 10. Wait and watch for non-verbal communication.** – Listen with your eyes, too. Watch for the speakers gestures and facial expressions.



Listening is not something that just happens without work on the listener's part. It's an active process in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker. Listeners should remain neutral and non-judgmental, this means trying not to take sides or form opinions, especially early in the conversation. Active listening is also about patience - pauses and short periods of silence should be accepted. Listeners should not be tempted to jump in with questions or comments every time there are a few seconds of silence. Active listening involves giving the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings, they should, therefore, be given adequate time for that.

It is common, when listening to someone else speak, to be formulating a reply while the other person is still talking. However, this means that we are not really listening to all that is being said. Even good listeners are often guilty of critically evaluating what is being said before fully understanding the message that the speaker is trying to communicate. The result is that assumptions are made and conclusions reached about the speaker's meaning that might be inaccurate. This type of ineffective listening is not good and can lead to misunderstandings.

Effective listening is something that takes practice for almost everyone. It is an important skill, though, that can benefit everyone around you. Start practicing effective listening in your daily life, and it will become easier and easier.

Practicing Effective Listening:

Do position yourself so that you can see and hear the other person clearly.

Don't try to develop your response while the other person is speaking.

Do suspend your judgment of the other person's appearance and delivery.

Don't interrupt when you disagree or feel the need to challenge a statement.

Do examine your thoughts for prejudice or bias that may influence your listening.

Don't cut the person off or let your mind wander once you believe you have captured the speaker's message.

Do listen to the feelings being expressed and reflect those feelings back to the speaker to show you understand.

Don't feel the need to have the last word.

Do maintain frequent eye contact with the speaker.

Don't assume you know what the speaker is going to say before they say it.

If you practice these skills in your everyday life, your fellow supervisors, coworkers, family, and friends will notice!