

Reflective Listening

Definition

Reflective listening, or active listening, is a communication technique. In this technique, listeners are entirely focused on the speakers and what they're saying. They provide reassurance to the listener that they are listening and understand what they're saying. The goal of reflective listening is for speakers to be encouraged more than in typical conversation to fully express their beliefs and thoughts since speakers know that those listening to them understand and empathize with what they're saying. In this way, speakers come up with their own resolutions or solutions to their difficulties.¹

Reflective listening is a communication technique in which the listener tries to understand the speaker's idea and then communicates it back to them to confirm it was understood correctly. Reflective listening requires the speaker to be able to reflect the speaker's ideas and feelings as accurately as possible.²

Steps to Reflective Listening

1. The first step is to make a conscious effort to focus your mind solely on listening to what the other person has to say. Although most conversations start with that intention, the mind tends to lose focus and move its attention to other issues. You can avoid this by constantly making an effort to focus on the speaker.
2. After listening to a thought or an idea, the next step should be to determine what the speaker meant to transmit to you through those words. It is important that you make an effort not to let your own opinions on the matter influence your analysis, as the purpose is not to combat the speaker's ideas, but rather to make sure that you properly understand them.
3. After coming to a conclusion regarding the meaning of the speaker's words, you should confirm that your interpretation of the message is the same as what the speaker intended to transmit. You can do this either by repeating parts of their message word for word or by paraphrasing it.
4. The speaker is likely to have a response to your reflection. The response is usually either a confirmation that you properly understood what they are trying to say or a correction in which they explain their point further and try to help you get a clear understanding of what they meant to say.³

¹ [What Is Reflective Listening? - The Edvocate \(theedadvocate.org\)](https://theedadvocate.org/what-is-reflective-listening/). Accessed 25 May 2022.

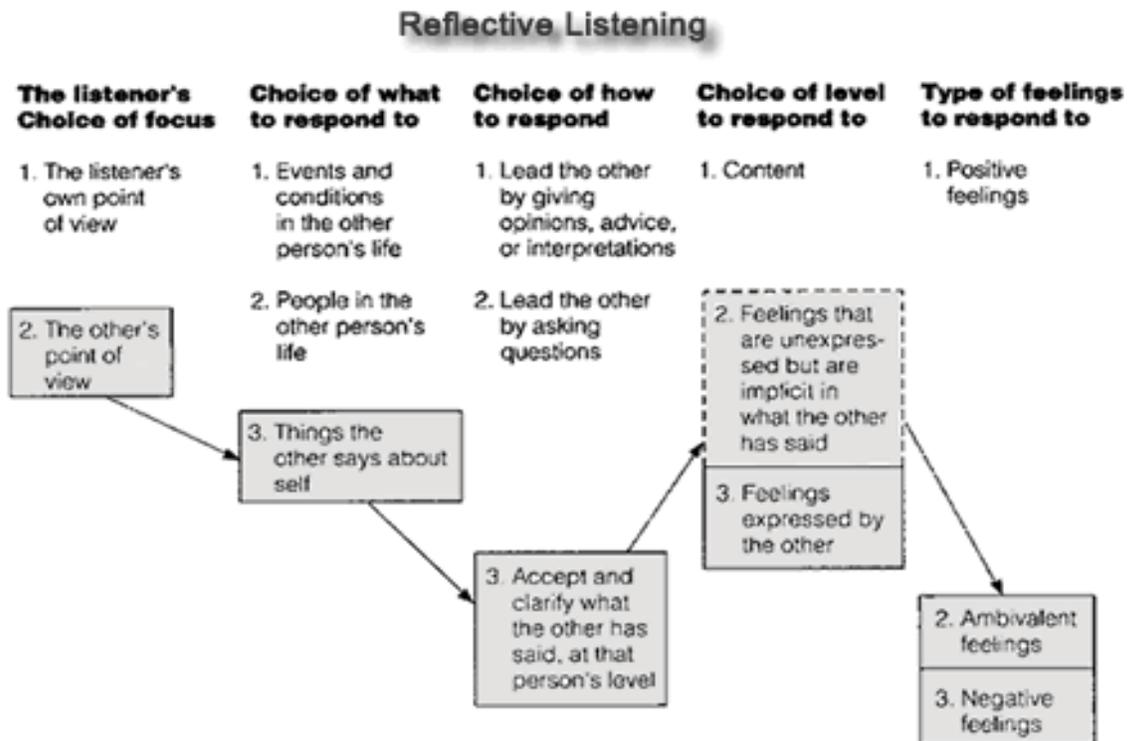
² [How To Practice Reflective Listening \(With Tips and Examples\) | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/soft-skills/reflective-listening). Accessed 25 May 2022.

³ Ibid. Accessed 25 May 2022.

Tips for Reflective Listening

1. Avoid making judgements.
2. Focus on verbal and non-verbal cues.
3. Understand the speaker's feelings.
4. Don't offer advice.⁴

The following chart, adapted from *Communication in Organizations*, by Dalmar Fisher, shows the options the listener has in a conversation, and how a reflective listener would choose (shaded boxes).⁵



⁴ Ibid. Accessed 25 May 2022.

⁵ [Reflective Listening to Improve Communication Skills \(people-communicating.com\)](https://www.people-communicating.com). Accessed 25 May 2022.