

Four Types of Listening

“Easy listening is a style of music, not communication.”
Harvey Mackay, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

Most communication experts agree that poor listening skills are the biggest contributors to poor communication. There are four basic types of listening. Which one do you think most people practice?

- 1. Inactive listening.** The definition of this is the old adage, “In one ear and out the other.” You hear the words, but your mind is wandering and no communication is taking place.
- 2. Selective listening.** You hear only what you want to hear. You hear some of the message and immediately begin to formulate your reply or second guess the speaker without waiting for the speaker to finish.
- 3. Active listening.** You listen closely to content and intent. What emotional meaning might the speaker be giving you? You try to block out barriers to listening. Most importantly, you are non-judgmental and empathetic.
- 4. Reflective Listening.** This is active listening when you also work to clarify what the speaker is saying and make sure there is mutual understanding.