

Co-operantics

Co-operative skills for everyone

10 Commandments for Good Listening

with acknowledgements to John Adair

1. **Stop speaking**

You cannot listen if you are speaking. **“Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice”**
Polonius (Hamlet)

2. **Put the speaker at ease**

Help them feel that they are free to talk.

3. **Show them that you want to listen**

Look and act interested. Do not read your text messages or tweets while they talk.
Listen to understand, rather than to oppose.

4. **Remove distractions**

Don't doodle, tap fingers or shuffle papers. Would it be quieter if you shut the door, or moved away from noisy machinery?

5. **Empathise**

Try to put yourself in their place, so you can see their point of view.

6. **Be patient**

Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt the speaker.

7. **Hold your temper**

An angry person often gets the wrong meaning.

8. **Go easy on argument and criticism**

This puts the speaker on the defensive. They may clam up, or get angry. Do not argue – even if you win, you lose.

9. **Ask questions**

This is encouraging and shows you are listening. It also helps to develop points further.

10. **Stop speaking**

This is first and last, because all the other commandments depend on it. You just can't do a good job of listening while you are speaking.

Nature gave us two ears but only one tongue – a gentle hint that we should listen more than we speak. (Or as a young co-operator once put it **“Big Mouth needs Big Ears!”**)