



# Are you a good listener?

BY RUTH M. FLORESCA

Listening is all about making an effort to hear and truly understand something. It's the basis of all good relationships, including those with students and fellow teachers. How do your listening skills measure up? Take this quiz to find out.

**1. When a pupil shares a personal problem with you, your first reaction is to...**

- A)** Immediately think of a practical solution
- B)** Agree with what he's saying
- C)** Share a similar experience that happened to you
- D)** Ask how this makes him feel

**2. A student tells you she's afraid of flunking tomorrow's test. You say...**

- A)** "Just study, you'll be okay."
- B)** "Yes, it's a really hard test."
- C)** "When I was your age, I was scared of exams too."
- D)** "You sound pretty worried. How come?"

**3. A fellow teacher shares that she's getting tired of**

**teaching but doesn't know what to do about it. You...**

- A)** Suggest alternative jobs or give her ideas on home business ventures
- B)** Pat her on the back and say "I know what you mean"
- C)** Tell her how you got over the same dilemma
- D)** Let her confide her reasons and see if you can help her figure out what she can do next

**4. When listening to someone, the most important thing is ...**

- A)** Making them feel better or fixing the problem
- B)** To show the speaker that you believe him
- C)** Saying your piece afterwards
- D)** Putting yourself in their shoes



**5. On a very bad day, your sister calls to talk about her financial burdens. You...**

- A)** Offer to lend money outright
- B)** Commiserate with her about the bad economy
- C)** Share your own experience and how you're dealing with it
- D)** Admit you've just had a tiring day and ask if you can call back later

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Ruth M. Floresca has a degree in Development Communication from UP Los Baños and is currently a freelance writer contributing to several national magazines. Though not a teacher by profession, she applies various teaching skills and techniques in tutoring her three school-aged children.

## IF YOU ANSWERED...

### MOSTLY AS

You're a solutions-oriented listener. You listen to the other person so that you can help solve the problem. You always want to help and are very practical. You'd rather listen to facts than feelings. Bear in mind, though, that if you're focused on creating a solution while listening to a problem, you may not be able to really get what the speaker is saying. Remember that emotions matter, too, even if you can't always do something about them.

### MOSTLY BS

You're an affirming listener. To make people feel better, you

tend to tell them that they're right—whether you actually think so or not. This usually produces instant positive results, since the speaker feels that someone is on her side. But in the long run, you may not be helping if you're not being honest. You can remain objective and honest while showing your support for the speaker.

### MOSTLY CS

You are a self-focused listener. Even though you're giving the other person a chance to talk, you're likely to already be formulating the response in your head or thinking about your opinion. You tend to share a lot of similar stories to reassure the speaker that he's not alone. Although you

have good intentions, you might end up giving unsolicited advice, turning the discussion towards yourself, and frustrating the other person who wants to share something with you. Forget about yourself, your opinions and stories for a while, and focus your entire self on the speaker.

### MOSTLY DS

You are an empathetic listener, which is the highest level of listening and communication. You have the ability to really hear others out and understand what they have to say. You make a conscious effort to be mentally and physically "there." You're probably able to perceive the

speaker's feelings, values, needs, strengths and weaknesses. Share this skill with others, so they will become more effective listeners, too!

## How to be a better listener:

- Make a conscious effort to listen.
- Be alert for what is left unsaid.
- Don't think of your responses in advance.
- Don't talk too much.
- Be respectful.
- Don't judge or stereotype the speaker.
- Face the speaker and make eye contact.



## DEAR TITA LITA

Angelita L. Sta. Ana, Ed.D. is the English Schools Division Supervisor of the City of Marikina. She has been an educator for the past 30 years and also does editorial consulting. Through the years, she has inspired and helped many young teachers to grow professionally and personally.

# Misbehaving

### Dear Tita Lita,

There's a barkada of five boys in my class who answer back, create noise, and are generally so *magulo* they drive me crazy. Often, I have no choice but to shout at them, and I'm even tempted to hit them just to teach them a lesson. What can I do to get their obedience and respect?

The most important thing is that you don't lose control over the situation, which is what happens when their actions make you irritable and tense. This might just make the boys taunt you all the more. Your other pupils will also see this and react to your tension negatively. Retain your poise and self-confidence. Don't allow the boys to dominate you. Take them aside after class and have a serious talk with them where you're in charge.

The next step is difficult, but it's also important that you don't label them as "bad boys." If you do, they may think, "Since the teacher thinks I'm bad anyway, I may as well be, and enjoy myself in the process!" Instead, give them the benefit of the doubt. Ask yourself, and ask them directly: why are they behaving this way? Their behavior is only the symptom of a deeper problem. Instead of using brute force to make them tow the line, discover the root of the problem. Knowing the cause will make it easier to find and implement the right solution.

Finally, reward success. Create a classroom of love and acceptance by openly admiring, approving of, and affirming good behavior or good work. A relationship of trust between teacher and pupils is the secret of good classroom management.

### Other practical tips:

1. Know the general behavior patterns of the age group you're teaching
2. Treat each pupil as an important and unique individual
3. Be a role model by respecting and listening to your students; tell them you expect the same treatment.
4. Always verbalize your affection for and approval of your students; be generous with praise

### SCHOOL TEACHERS GET A BAD RAP

### Dear Tita Lita,

With the controversy over the DepEd's Bridge Program, Philippine public schools are in the media spotlight these days. I get so hurt when I read newspapers articles saying that public schools in the Philippines are not effective. Many teachers give 100% or more to their jobs, but we lack the resources needed to teach properly. Is there anything I can do about all the negative things that people are saying?

An optimist may see light where there is none, but why must the pessimist run to blow out any light that exists? This question seems to fit the situation in which most public school teachers now find themselves, and I'm with you. But frustration does not serve any purpose; instead, let's objectively look at what they're saying and accept the realities of our public school system. The issues brought about by the Bridge Program are a wake-up call to each and every member of the DepEd family. The silver lining to the cloud is that we teachers now have room to improve the services we're delivering to our students and the community. Let's face the problem with dynamism and positive energy.

Synectics is a group technique for problem solving that involves creative thinking from all stakeholders. You can, for example, set up brainstorming sessions among faculty members, and even with parents who want to take part.

Communicate to parents the necessity of promoting excellence in reading, writing and Math through a strong parenting program. Do home visitations, parents' conferences and talks on teaching basic skills to children, which hopefully will alleviate the problem of illiterate students due to large class sizes and book shortage.

Promote synergy. Teachers must work with co-teachers, principals with fellow principals, and across the line to promote best practice and share effective methods.

### DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

Write to Tita Lita! Send your letter to:  
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