

UNIT I: WAYS TO LISTEN

LISTENING IS MORE THAN JUST HEARING

The average student spends more than half of each school day *listening*. That means that you give more time to listening than to anything else you do in school.

Most people think of listening as something as natural as walking or eating. They don't think of it as anything you have to work at to do well. But we are not *born* good listeners. We learn to be good listeners.

Why is this so? Hearing is a natural ability, but *listening* is more than just hearing. Listening means directing your attention to — or *focusing on* — what you're hearing and trying to make sense of what you've heard.

Listening is a study skill. It's one of the most important study skills because listening is a part of almost everything else that you do. It seems simple, but it's not. Being a good listener doesn't come naturally. It requires learning and practice.

WHY IS IT HARD TO LISTEN EVEN WHEN YOU'RE INTERESTED?

Generally people talk at about 125 words per minute. However, we think at a speed that is more than three times as fast, about 400 words per minute. That means our thoughts move much faster than the words of whatever we're listening to. So it's not surprising that we often let our attention wander away from what another person is saying to us.

The key to becoming a good listener is to be an *active* listener: to keep your thoughts *focused* on what you are listening to.

THE LISTENING GAME

Directions: A story will be read aloud to you only *once*. Pay close attention to the details of the story. When the story is finished, you will be asked to tell what you have heard. Listen carefully! (You are not allowed to take notes.)

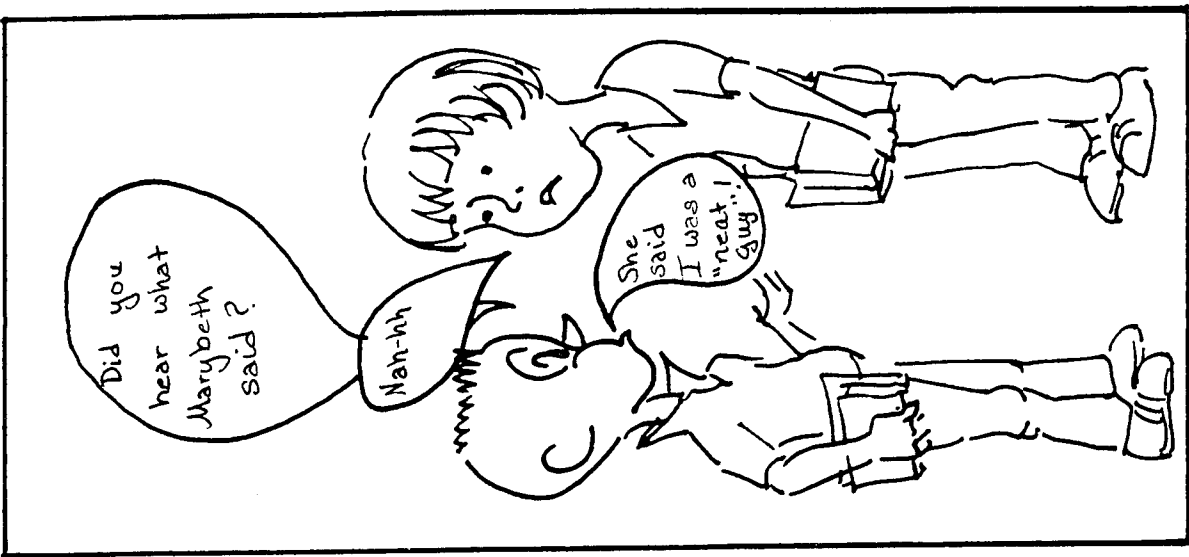
WHEN YOU LISTEN, WHAT DO YOU DO?

The picture on the next page shows a classroom. It is almost the end of a class, and the teacher has given the students a few minutes to talk together. Read over their conversations.

Find the students who are called *Steve* and *Marybeth*.

Although Steve was not sitting with Marybeth's group, he heard what she had to say.

Why do you think he was able to give his attention to — or *focus on* — what Marybeth said? Write your answer on the lines below.



STEPS IN ACTIVE LISTENING

It is a *fact* that we can all become active listeners. So remember the word *FACT*. It will help you remember the steps in *active listening*, because the first letter of each of the steps spells the word *FACT*.

STEP # 1: FOCUS

The first step in active listening is to *focus*. This means to give your attention to something. Television often “catches” your attention. It doesn’t require you to do the active work of *focusing*. However, when your father calls you from the next room as you are watching television, you have to pull your mind from the television to really **focus** on what he is saying.

STEP # 2: ASK

While you listen, *ask* yourself questions about what the speaker is saying. Then try to answer your questions, or see if the speaker answers them. Asking and answering questions in this way can help you make sense of the speaker’s message.

When you are listening in school, you might *ask* yourself: what is it that the teacher wants me to know? Do I understand this? What don’t I understand about what I am hearing? Does this make sense to me?

STEP # 3: CONNECT

Keep asking yourself why the speaker is saying what she or he is saying. Try to *connect* the main ideas with each other. For instance, the speaker may talk about growing food in a certain place. You already know that these things are needed for people to grow food: climate, soil conditions, and technology. As the speaker is talking, you will listen for and *connect* the main ideas of climate, soil conditions, and technology in order to understand how the food is grown.

STEP # 4: TRY TO PICTURE

Try to *picture in your mind* what the speaker is saying. Some people find that they can listen and remember better if they use their imaginations to make *mind pictures*. For example, if you are listening to a set of directions about how to get somewhere, make an imaginary map of the directions in your mind.

TRY IT AGAIN - THE LISTENING GAME

Directions: Again a story will be read to you only *once*. Try out the *Steps To Active Listening*. *Focus* on the speaker so you can pay close attention to the details of the story. *Ask* yourself how these details *connect*. Try to *picture* what is happening.

When the story is finished, you will be asked to tell what you have heard.

1. Did you find listening any easier this time? _____

If so, why? _____

2. Which of the *Steps* is the most difficult for you to do?

Why do you think this is so? _____

UNIT I SUMMARY: WAYS TO LISTEN

We are not born as good listeners. We have to learn to listen well. Active listening is a study skill.

We can learn to listen actively by following these steps:

Focus

Look at the speaker. Try to pay attention to what is being said.

Ask questions

Try to figure out what is important by asking questions. Then answer your questions, or see if the speaker answers your questions.

Connect

“Make sense” out of what the speaker is saying by *connecting* main ideas with each other.

Try to picture

Try to see “in your mind’s eye” what the speaker is talking about.

EXERCISE I

TUNING INTO DIRECTIONS

You will find that listening to and following directions is a very important skill. This is true not only in schoolwork but also in your daily life. Probably each of you has a story about a time when you only half heard or didn't hear a direction. Afterwards you found yourself in a complete mess, like the man in the old joke:

He thought they said "trains" when they passed out brains, so he ran to catch one.
Never got himself a brain!

It seems that the man in the joke shares a problem with many people. Recently the students in a midwestern school received very poor grades on an achievement test. When they investigated the cause of these results, guidance counselors and classroom teachers found not poor students but poor listeners. These students had never taken this kind of test before. They weren't tuned in to listening to and following directions. So they could only guess at what they were supposed to do.

You can't guess about directions and expect to be right! You need to listen carefully and ask questions if you don't understand what you have heard.

You are already showing that you are a good listener because you are reading this page as you were instructed. Now here's an important clue! You must listen to and follow only directions #3, #7, and #9 the next time your teacher reads the directions.

The students in the midwestern school were then taught how to listen to directions. They also learned to read directions more carefully. When they took the achievement test again, they did much better. After you have read this page carefully, keep the secret to yourself! Write 3, 7, and 9 on the page before this one so you will know what directions to follow. Listen carefully, follow the right directions, and you will spell the right word in crayon.

EXERCISE II

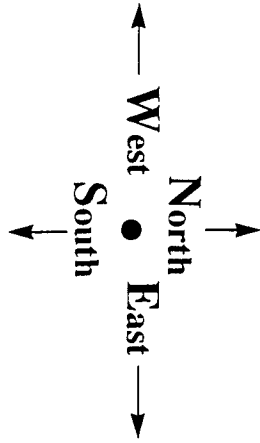
A TOUR OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

Possible Beginnings and Ends

Lincoln Memorial - The Capitol
The Capitol — The White House
General Grant statue - Washington Monument
Botanic Gardens - The White House
Lincoln Memorial - National Art Gallery

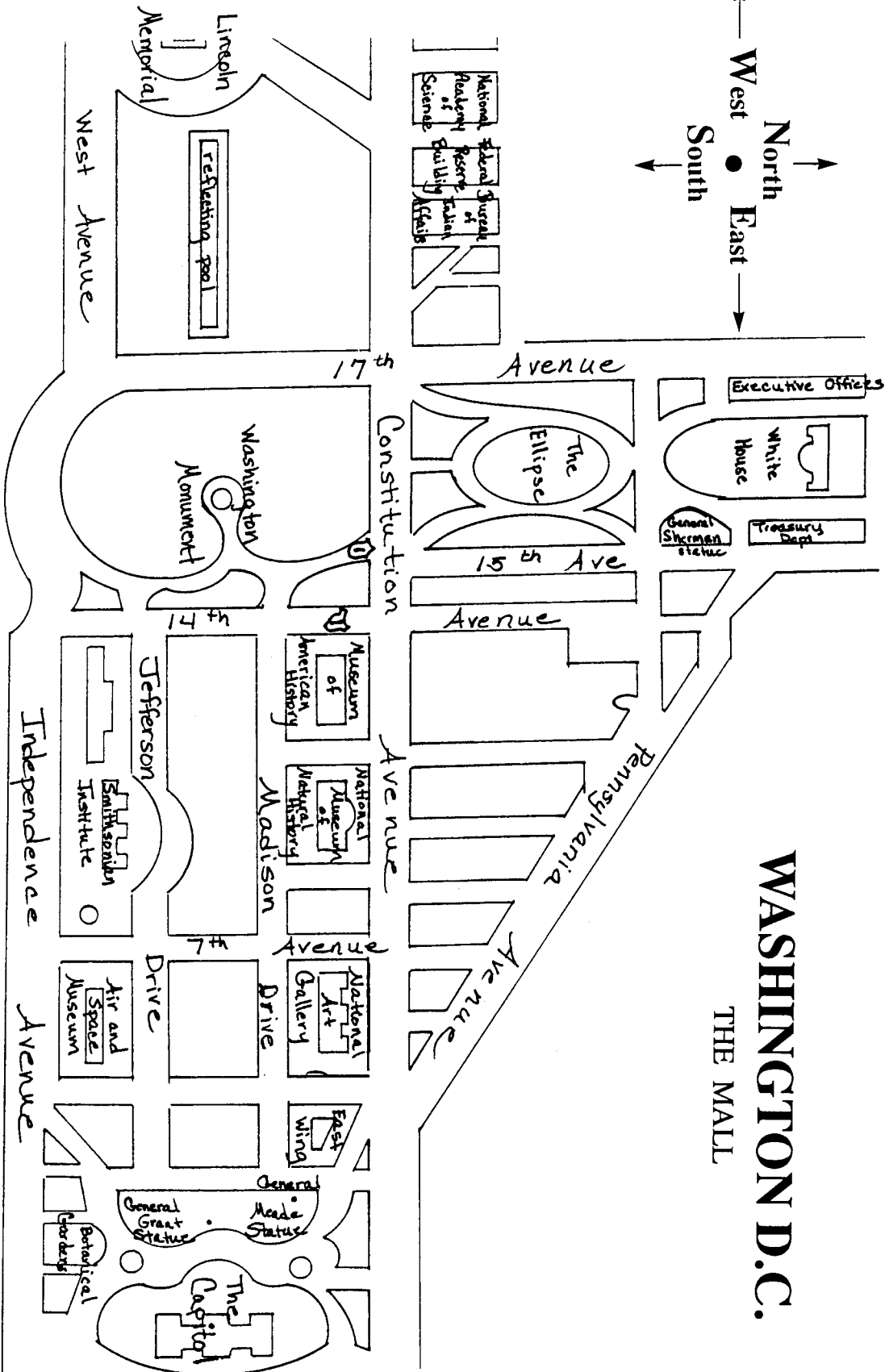
Directions for Marking Your Map

1. Locate your beginning point. Put a star on it.
2. Locate your end point. Draw a circle around it.
3. Put an arrow above the three stops you wish to make along the way.
4. Now mark in a reasonable route. You must go down streets and avenues.
Do not cross over blocks or malls.



WASHINGTON D.C.

THE MALL



YOUR ROUTE

Giving Directions - Procedure

1. Tell your partner where to start. Have your partner mark that spot with a star.
2. Give directions to get to the first point of interest. Have your partner mark that spot with an arrow.
3. Give directions to get to your second point of interest. Have your partner mark that spot with an arrow.
4. Give directions to get to your third point of interest. Have your partner mark that spot with an arrow.
5. Give directions to get to your end spot. Have your partner mark that spot by circling it.
6. Compare maps. See how closely your routes match.

Rules and Pointers

1. All of your directions must be spoken. You may not show your map to your partner or point things out on your partner's map.
2. The listener is not allowed to say anything. This means that the listener may not ask questions or ask the speaker to repeat or wait.
3. When you are giving directions, speak slowly and clearly.
4. Use the names of roads, avenues, and streets. (Be aware that some streets are unnamed.)

UNIT II SUMMARY: TUNING INTO DIRECTIONS

Remember the STEPS IN ACTIVE LISTENING from Unit I. They are these:

Focus

Look at the speaker. Try to pay attention to what is being said.

Ask questions

Try to figure out what is important by asking questions. Then answer your questions, or see if the speaker answers your questions.

Connect

Make sense out of what the speaker is saying by *connecting* main ideas with each other.

Try to picture

Try to see *in your mind's eye* what the speaker is talking about.

Reading and listening to directions is an important skill. This is true not only in school but in any situation in life.

Read directions carefully. Be sure to read *all* of the directions. Then if you don't understand, ask questions. If you are not allowed to ask questions, ask yourself the questions and listen for the answers.

Listen carefully when someone is giving you directions. Don't try to guess what they are. Listen to *all* of the directions. Then if you don't understand what you've heard, ask questions.

If you can't remember all the directions, write them down on a piece of paper.