

Do:

- Be an active listener
- Listen for content and for feelings
- Use wait time to give speakers opportunities to finish their statements
- Be aware of your nonverbal communication patterns
- Listen more than you speak
- Use questions that are appropriate for the context
- Use exploratory or focus questions to open the conversation
- Use clarifying questions that lead to a clearer understanding of the topic or issue
- Ask questions that invite elaboration
- Ask probing (often open-ended) questions that extend and deepen the conversation
- Use statements that help “pull the conversation together”
- Use summary statements
- Paraphrase others’ words
- Ask group participants for feedback about your message or to summarize what they heard
- Be quick to praise and show appreciation
- Find at least one aspect of the teacher’s or group’s work to praise in each session
- Thank the teacher or group for their time, flexibility, efforts, and so on
- Let teachers know what you learned from working with them

Don’t:

- Interrupt the speaker
- Practice internally what you are planning to say in response (this can prevent active listening)
- Make snap judgments about the messages of others
- Turn the discussion or conversation into a “blame game”
- Monopolize the conversation
- Focus on what you would have done in a specific situation

Figure 5.1: Dos and don’ts of effective communication.

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