

10 TOP TIPS FOR ACTIVE LISTENING IN ORAL HISTORY

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1. Face the speaker; use eye contact

Maintain eye contact but adapt when necessary. Look to one side on occasion and maintain open posture.

2. "Listen" to non-verbal cues.

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'Hear' the data being shared with you by your participant. Facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures can tell you just as much as what is being said in words.

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3. Do not interrupt.

Be comfortable with silences in the interview. Being interrupted is frustrating for the other person. Silences give the other person the chance to speak again.

Emotional reactions can get in the way of listening. Avoid anticipating the conversation.

4. Avoid judgement

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5. Don't plan what you'll say next

You can't listen and prepare what you're saying next at the same time. So just allow yourself to be in the moment with your participant.

Nod your head, smile and make small noises like "yes" and "right" to show that you're listening and to encourage your interviewee to continue.

6. Show that you're listening

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7. Do not impose your opinions or solutions.

Listen without judgement. Oral history allows the speaker to shape their narrative in their own words. So give your interviewee that space in full.

To help retain focus, try repeating your interviewee's words in your head as they say them. Do not look at your phone, watch or recording equipment.

8. Stay focused

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9. Ask questions

Ask relevant questions can show that you've been listening and help clarify what has been said. "You said that... tell me more about that..."

Reflecting back shows you are paying attention and reinforces the 'loop of understanding.' Ask your participant "So if I have understood you correctly, what happened was..."

10. Paraphrase and summarise

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