Public Speaking Notes: The Listening Process

Objectives:

1. Explain the difference between hearing and listening

Hearing vs. Listening
Hearing: sense through which sound is received; physical process; passive; first step in the listening process
Listening: concentrating on the sounds you hear; interpreting them and reacting to them; mental process that requires active participation

2. Explain how listening is part of the listening process

Listening and Public Speaking
By developing good listening habits, audience members not only get more out of the speech, they give more to the speaker through their feedback. By concentrating on what is said and how it is said, audience members hear more than words. They also hear the emotions and emphasis that lie behind the words that add to their meaning.

3. Explain why listening is an important skill to master

The Five Levels of Listening
When you listen to speeches, the level of the concentration you must exert is affected by the speech Situation, Purpose, Audience, or Method (SPAM). Example: If a speech is given outdoors, the people in the audience must concentrate more to block out noises around them [SITUATION]

4. Understand the 5 levels of listening

Level 1: Listening for ENJOYMENT- the easiest of the five levels requiring only momentary concentration, but not long term memory
Example: listening to a joke or after-dinner speech

Level 2: Listening for INFORMATION - requires more concentration; you need to learn the main idea. Note words and phrases that preview important details supporting the main idea
Example: class lecture or informative speech

Level 3: Critical Listening - involves listening for information and evaluating that information. This skill will help you determine how information you hear in a speech can affect you by finding strengths and ideas you support
Example: persuasive speech or sales pitch

Level 4: Precision Listening - precision refers to exactness or the ability to distinguish clearly. It gives clues to a speaker's emotions and meanings and what he finds important.
Example: argumentative speech or debate
Level 5: Empathy Listening - empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's place. It enables you to understand why a person feels, believes, or acts a certain way. You don't have to agree with them, but understand them. This is the most difficult level to master. You must listen for information, evaluate it critically, and listen to emotions as well as the words. This level of listening may be applied to all types of speeches.

5. Understand the causes of poor listening

Poor Listening
Physical Barriers: noise or other physical distractions; speaker talks too softly; difficulty in seeing the speaker; the listener's physical condition
Mental Barriers: mind processes information much faster (about 500 words/min) than a speaker can speak (about 125 - 250 words/min); your mind hears what's being said while thinking about something else at the same time; attitudes towards the speaker or subject; speech is above the level of listener's knowledge; selective listening (you block out what you don't want to hear)

6. Understand strategies to improve listening skills

Improving Listening Skills
1. Concentrate - block out distractions
2. Practice listening - listen to the news; spend quiet time concentrating on the sounds around you
3. Prepare to listen - sit close to speaker; if topic is unfamiliar do preliminary research/reading; ask questions before presentation
4. Listen for key words/phrases - "Most important thing...", "My next point..."
5. Take notes - outline major ideas