

The man who grinds out this kind of grist is also an expert test-builder. To your pleasure, you are going to discover that he has one objective test item on practically every fact he has covered during the semester, and you will recognize them well enough to get them right. He is going to have between 5 and 10 questions on every principle that he has covered during the semester, too, and you will get the bulk of those right.

There is still another beauty in this way of taking notes. It doesn't seem to make a whole lot of difference whether the speaker is well organized or confused. If he has any facts or principles in his discourse, you can screen them out with this technique of note-taking.

Now, of course, the principle at stake here is broader than I am making it seem. It is this: The good listener is a flexible, adaptable kind of note-taker who adjusts his note-taking system to the organizational plan the speaker is following, or the complete absence of any such plan at all.

Bad listening habit No. 6 is faking attention to the speaker. In many years of teaching school, if I would look out across the audience and see the bulk of my students staring back at me from this pose (demonstrating) I was always inclined to make a mental note to myself and say, "Look at this professor. They all have you tuned in this morning." We now know that one of the surest indexes to inattention in our whole culture is this posture on the part of the listener. Having paid the speaker the overt courtesy of appearing to tune him in, this one now feels conscience-free to take off on any one of a thousand mental tangents, and that is probably where he is gone. If you ever face a group yourself and see the bulk of the people staring back at you from this pose (demonstrating) for Heaven's sake, stop short in your discourse and tell everybody to stand up and do some calisthenics with you to get the blood circulating again.

Good listening is not relaxed and passive at all. It is characterized by a quicker beating of the heart, faster circulation of the blood, a small rise in body temperature. It is energy-burning and energy-consuming. In plain words, it is hard work. The best meaning of the word, attention, is a collection of tensions inside the listener that can be resolved only by getting some facts or ideas the speaker is trying to convey.