

DON'T BE A GOOFUS: SHARPEN YOUR LISTENING SKILLS



As we sit in front of our glowing computer monitors or stare at our phone screens throughout the day, we receive a constant barrage of messages dictating our workloads, our purchases, our Friday night plans. Sure we can--and do-- choose to ignore some of them (you don't even own a home. . .why would you want vinyl siding?). But what about when the messages are coming from an actual person: co-worker, friend, family member, significant other? Listening is a skill that most of don't think about developing, mostly because we think we're experts. After all, we do it all the time, right? We may be listening all the time, but what's happening to that information once it reaches our brain and how are we reacting to it? Michael Purdy, co-author of *Listening in Everyday Life* tells us that, in numerous studies over the past few decades, employers have ranked listening skills among the top five most important skills they look for in employees. Remember those Goofus and Gallant from the Highlights magazines? Goofus was always messing up by bossing around his friends and stealing apples while Gallant cooperated and refrained from fruit theft. So in the spirit of Goofus and Gallant (oh Highlights, how we miss you), here are just a few of many characteristics he identified for good listeners and bad listeners. Like Gallant, good listeners: Use eye contact appropriately, Are patient and doesn't interrupt (waits for the speaker to finish), Paraphrase, restate or summarize what the speaker says, Don't criticize, are nonjudgmental Like Goofus, poor listeners: Don't give eye contact (eyes wander), Interrupt the speaker (is impatient), Give the speaker little or no (verbal or nonverbal) feedback, Are judgmental As much as we'd all like to fall into the "Good listeners" category like Gallant would, we've gotta admit that there are times when our listening behaviors are sloppy and disrespectful-- more like Goofus'. We like to think about what we're going to say next, we get distracted and don't really pay attention, we immediately jump to conclusions. By focusing on what the other person is saying and giving them nonverbal and verbal feedback, we enrich our conversations and our relationships. Just like good listeners try to cut through the clutter and hone in on what you're talking about, we here at [EmploymentCrossing](#) know to hone in and focus on only the jobs that you want to see. Don't space out. Instead check out the [free trial](#), start applying for jobs, and listen to your gut.