

Thought-Provoking Quotes on the Topics of Communication, Speech, Language, Hearing, and Listening

Compiled by Pat Mervine, Speaking of Speech.com, May 2005

My heart is singing this morning. A miracle has happened! The light of understanding has shone upon my little pupil's mind, and behold, all things have changed!

Anne Sullivan

The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.

Peter Drucker

Many attempts to communicate are nullified by saying too much.

Robert Greenleaf

Is sloppiness in speech caused by ignorance or apathy? I don't know and I don't care.

William Safire

Be a craftsman in speech that thou mayest be strong, for the strength of one is the tongue, and speech is mightier than all fighting.

Maxims of Ptahhotep, 3400 B.C.

Speech is a mirror of the soul: as a man speaks, so is he.

Publilius Syrus (~100 BC),

Thought is the fountain of speech.

Chrysippus (280 BC - 207 BC)

The trouble with her is that she lacks the power of conversation but not the power of speech.

George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950)

The true spirit of conversation consists in building on another man's observation, not overturning it.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

All of life is a risk; in fact we're not going to get out alive. Casualness leads to casualties. Communication is the ability to affect other people with words.

Jim Rohn (1908 - 2002)

Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like riding a bicycle or typing. If you're willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of very part of your life.

Brian Tracy

Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know.

Jim Rohn

It seemed rather incongruous that in a society of supersophisticated communication, we often suffer from a shortage of listeners.

Erma Bombeck

Self-expression must pass into communication for its fulfillment.

Pearl Buck

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the emotions to affect other people.

Jim Rohn

The worst thing about the miracle of modern communications is the Pavlovian pressure it places upon everyone to communicate whenever a bell rings.

Russell Baker

Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.

Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870)

Language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides.

Rita Mae Brown,

High thoughts must have high language.

Aristophanes (450 BC - 388 BC)

As was his language so was his life.

Seneca (5 BC - 65 AD)

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 - 1951)

A different language is a different vision of life.

Federico Fellini (1920 - 1993)

Language exists only on the surface of our consciousness. The great human struggles are played out in silence and in the ability to express oneself.

Franz Xavier Kroetz

Elegance of language may not be in the power of all of us; but simplicity and straight forwardness are. Write much as you would speak; speak as you think. If with your inferior, speak no coarser than usual; if with your superiors, no finer. Be what you say; and, within the rules of prudence, say what you are.

Alford

Language is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.

Noah Webster

Grammar and logic free language from being at the mercy of the tone of voice.
Grammar protects us against misunderstanding the sound of an uttered name; logic
protects us against what we say have double meaning.
Rosenstock-Huessy

The individual's whole experience is built upon the plan of his language.
Henri Delacroix

The opposite of talking isn't listening. The opposite of talking is waiting.
Fran Lebowitz

There are people who, instead of listening to what is being said to them, are already
listening to what they are going to say themselves.
Albert Guinon (1863 - 1923)

Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening.
Dorothy Sarnoff

With the gift of listening comes the gift of healing.
Catherine de Hueck

If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply
be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear.
Pooh's Little Instruction Book, inspired by A. A. Milne

I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never
listen.
Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961)

Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us
are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold
and expand.
Karl Menninger

Opportunities are often missed because we are broadcasting when we should be
listening.
Author Unknown

So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening
not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of
it, not part of it.
Jiddu Krishnamurti

To improve communications, work not on the utterer, but the recipient.
Peter Drucker

Today, communication itself is the problem. We have become the world's first
overcommunicated society. Each year we send more and receive less.
Al Ries

The process of learning requires not only hearing and applying but also forgetting and then remembering again.

John Gray

I make progress by having people around me who are smarter than I am and listening to them. And I assume that everyone is smarter about something than I am.

Henry J. Kaiser

Listening is not merely not talking, though even that is beyond most of our powers; it means taking a vigorous, human interest in what is being told us.

Alice Duer Miller

People talking without speaking, / People listening without hearing...Sounds of Silence.
Paul Simon

Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery. . . . If you want to influence someone, listen to what he says. . . . When he finishes talking, ask him about any points that you do not understand.

Joyce Brothers

Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening for them is something more acute than listening to them. When their elders sit and begin, children are just waiting and hoping for one to come out, like a mouse from its hole.

Eudora Welty

Most of the successful people I've known are the ones who do more listening than talking.

Bernard Baruch

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.

Leo Buscaglia

Education commences at the mother's knee, and every word spoken within the hearing of little children tends towards the formation of character.

Hosea Ballou (1796 - 1861)

Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.

James Baldwin

When you stop learning, stop listening, stop looking and asking questions, always new questions, then it is time to die.

Lillian Smith