

## Paraphrasing Basics

What is paraphrasing? Expressing, in our own words, the meaning we got from what someone said.

<b>Why</b>	<b>How</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Paraphrasing is the most direct way to show someone that their thoughts and feelings were understood.</li><li>● Paraphrasing helps people feel that their ideas are valid and respected because there is no judgment involved.</li><li>● Paraphrasing allows speakers to hear how their ideas are being interpreted by others.</li><li>● Paraphrasing gives speakers a chance to clarify or confirm to avoid misunderstanding. It's especially helpful when:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The topic is complex or complicated.</li><li>○ The words used can have more than one meaning.</li><li>○ There are distractions.</li><li>○ Strong emotions are expressed, and you want to show that you care.</li><li>○ Shared understanding is important.</li></ul></li><li>● Paraphrasing supports people in thinking out loud.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● In your own words, share what you think the speaker meant.</li><li>● If the speaker's statement is short, keep your paraphrase short.</li><li>● If the speaker's statement is lengthy, try to summarize in your paraphrase. (It may help to break long statements into key points to follow-up on with separate paraphrases.)</li><li>● To build trust in your intent to understand, begin the paraphrase with a comment like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ "It sounds like you're saying..."</li><li>○ "Let me see if I understand..."</li></ul></li><li>● After paraphrasing, observe the speaker's reaction. Look for verbal and non-verbal feedback that the speaker feels understood. Ask, "Did I get it right?" If not, ask for clarification until shared understanding is reached.</li></ul>

Adapted from *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* by Sam Kemer, et. all, 2014.

## Paraphrasing Practice

Tip	Example(s)
Frame the paraphrase as a question, so that the speaker can respond to confirm, correct, and/or expand.	"If I hear you right, you're saying...?" "So is it accurate to say...?" "It sounds like you expect...is that right?"
Use your own words as well as some of the key words the speaker used, and explore your understanding of what the speaker meant.	If someone said: "As a business manager, I want a clear understanding of the value you provide." You might paraphrase: "I hear that you'd like clarity about the value we bring to your business. By value, do you mean impact, services, or something else?"
Reflect back what you sense about the underlying feelings or impact on the speaker.	"That sounds like it's frustrating when..." "I'm sensing that you felt overwhelmed – am I close?"
When you need a little more information to understand before you paraphrase, ask for an example.	If someone said: "Sometimes the service I get just isn't up to par." You might ask: "Could you give me an example of what that looks like?" or "Could you tell me about a time when that happened?"

### Paraphrasing Exercise Instructions:

Two roles: Paraphraser and Speaker

- The Paraphraser asks a question from the list below, and the Speaker provides a complete response.
- When the Speaker finishes, the Paraphraser paraphrases and invites the Speaker to expand, clarify, or confirm.
- If time, choose another question and repeat the process.
- Switch roles and repeat the exercise.

### Exercise Questions:

1. What would your ideal vacation look and feel like?
2. What are some of your strong skills, and what aspects of work make good use of those skills?
3. What do you think about self-driving vehicles on public roads?
4. What are your thoughts on the education system here in the United States?

## Open-ended versus Closed-ended Questions

Questions can help gather more information and check understanding. No type of question is better than another in every situation. Depending on what you seek to achieve, one type of question will likely be more effective than another. Two primary types of questions are open-ended and closed-ended.

<b>Characteristics of Open-ended questions</b>	<b>Characteristics of Closed-ended questions</b>
<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote discussion by asking someone to open up and share their thoughts, knowledge, and/or feelings.</li> <li>• Ask the respondent to think and make (possibly new) connections.</li> <li>• Hand control of the conversation to the respondent.</li> <li>• Are typically non-threatening (no judgment, bias, blame, or suggestion).</li> <li>• Can be time-consuming or require more effort to create and use.</li> <li>• May result in unnecessary or excessive information.</li> </ul>	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit discussion by asking for brief and specific answers, relevant facts, agreement, verification, decision, etc.</li> <li>• Ask the respondent to provide known information and/or clarify information quickly and concisely.</li> <li>• Keep control of the conversation with the questioner.</li> <li>• Can feel threatening (show bias or judgment, place blame, or imply a suggestion).</li> <li>• Require little time investment or effort to create and use.</li> <li>• May result in misleading assumptions or conclusions.</li> </ul>
<p>Often begin with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What...?</li> <li>• How...?</li> <li>• Why...?</li> </ul> <p>Note: An open-ended inquiry may also begin with "Tell me" or "Describe."</p> <p>(Caution: Questions that begin with "why" may sound critical or judgmental depending on the circumstances and use.)</p>	<p>Often begin with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is/are...?</li> <li>• Do/did...?</li> <li>• Would/will...?</li> <li>• Could/can...?</li> <li>• Was/were...?</li> <li>• Have/has...?</li> <li>• Which...?</li> <li>• Who...?</li> <li>• When...?</li> <li>• Where...?</li> </ul>
<p>Are good for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an open conversation: "What did you do on vacation?"</li> <li>• Finding out more detail: "What else do we need to do to make this a success?"</li> <li>• Finding out the other person's opinion or issues: "What do you think about those changes?"</li> <li>• Generating thinking and awareness: "How might you handle that?"</li> </ul>	<p>Are good for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting quick and easy facts and answers: "When might you have this ready for review?"</li> <li>• Concluding a discussion or making a decision: "Now that we know the facts, are we all agreed this is the right course of action?"</li> <li>• Testing your understanding, or the other person's: "So, if I get this qualification, I will get a raise?"</li> <li>• Frame setting: "Are you happy with the service from your bank?"</li> </ul>

### Tips for Identifying Customer Expectations

If you get this...	Then...	Example Statements with Possible Responses:	
Straight expectation	Seek shared meaning of those words	Customer:	I expect you to be professional.
		Interviewer:	I'm curious, what does it look like to you to be professional?
Want (specific solution or request)	Look for the underlying, broader expectation	Customer:	I'd like to see reports organized differently. Highlight things we need to talk about, and limit the amount of information on a page.
		Interviewer:	It sounds like you expect reports to be clearer than they are – is that right? - What would an ideal report show you? - I'm curious how you use the reports.
Disappointment story (form of reality)	Look for the mirror image	Customer:	I'm often in the dark about how our project is progressing, and it feels like I have to call to keep things moving.
		Interviewer:	So, you expect to be informed about progress, and that we would make sure things keep moving smoothly – is that right? - Tell me more about what project information is important for you to know and when.
Satisfaction story (form of reality)	Confirm what you heard	Customer:	I've been really happy with how quickly people respond to my emails and phone calls.
		Interviewer:	That's great! It sounds like you expect timely and responsive communication – correct? - How quickly do you expect someone will respond to you?
Vague / general feedback	Dig a little	Customer:	Everything's great!
		Interviewer:	I'm so glad to hear that. I'm curious in what specific ways things are great.
Question	Gently remind them of the purpose of the session (to hear their expectations)  Let them know you'll capture and respond to questions after the session  Maybe probe to see if the question hints at an expectation	Customer:	What services do you offer?
		Interviewer:	It sounds like it might be unclear what services we offer, and I'd be happy to get you some more detailed information after this session.  - I'm curious if it's an expectation that our services would be clearly communicated and easy to find.
Comment about other DES programs or agencies	Listen  Confirm what you heard in follow-up  Tell them you'll pass on the information  In follow-up, inform them you passed it on	Customer:	I would like better communication from your Lean team.
		Interviewer:	I hear that you may have some unmet expectations about communication. I'll share this with Lean Transformation Services.  - This makes me curious what communication expectations you have for us.



# Listening Skill Building Ideas

## Showing Empathy

- ❖ Be on the lookout for things that sound like complaints. When you hear one, take a minute to consider how that person may be feeling and provide an empathetic response.
- ❖ Read an article, website, or news story that comes from a different point-of-view than your own. Imagine the author is standing in front of you. Write down 3 responses you could give to show understanding and empathy.

## Paraphrasing

- ❖ Read an article or watch a TED Talk. Pause at the end of each paragraph/point and paraphrase what you heard or read.

## Listening without Solving

- ❖ Ask a friend about his or her pet peeve. Practice asking questions to learn more about their feelings or the problem's impact without offering any solutions or suggestions.

## Asking Probing Questions

- ❖ Choose a word like "communication" or "upset" and practice asking a clarifying question every time you hear it this week. Try not to use the same question every time.
- ❖ Write a list of follow-up questions to use if someone answers "How was your day?" or "How are you doing?" with the response, "Fine." Try using a different question every day this week.

## Asking Open-Ended Questions

- ❖ Choose a conversation to observe (perhaps a team meeting or discussion between family members). Count how many closed-ended and open-ended questions you hear. Consider which open-ended questions you could have asked if you had been in the conversation.
- ❖ Declare an open-ended questions day (or hour). Challenge yourself to flip as many close-ended questions as you can during that time period.

## In General....

- ❖ Connect with a partner who is working on the same skill. Hold 10 minute practice sessions a few times each week.
- ❖ Draw a visual habit tracker (check Pinterest or the internet for ideas) and fill in when you successfully practice your listening habit.
- ❖ Find a friend and arrange a signal you can give each other whenever you exhibit a listening behavior you are working on improving. For example, a raised eyebrow anytime you offer an unasked for solution.

