

Listening Skills

- **Paraphrasing:** Make sure you understand and the other person feels heard. Listen for a “Yes, that’s what I’m saying”, but be ready to be corrected instead.

Red *“So for you, Trump is a big threat to the country” or “You’re saying that Obamacare needs fixing but should not be thrown out.”*

Blue *“So, you’re saying you don’t trust the federal government on health care—they will mess it up” or “You wish Trump didn’t tweet so much, but he’s there to shake things up in Washington.”*

DO NOT suggest any implications beyond their statement or offer your critique of what they have said, with comments like: “So you’re saying that the President’s character doesn’t matter” or “You’re saying that Trump can’t possibly learn on the job.”

- Ask real and honest **questions of understanding**, vs. loaded “gotcha” questions. (This is hard to do.)

Red *“Do you see Black Lives Matters helping or hurting things in our cities?”*

NOT *“Do you see attacking the police as the solution?”*

Blue *“I’m curious about what you make of Trump’s comments about women, like what he said on the Hollywood Access bus video.”*

NOT *“Why did you vote for a sexual predator?”*

It can be helpful to **ask how the other person came to their view** on an issue, especially if it’s strongly held. Stories are important: they humanize us.

Red *“I’m interested in how you came to believe in single-payer health care.”*

Blue *“How did you come to see the federal government as more the problem than the solution?”*

Then **acknowledge the experiences** behind the person’s views.

- **Listening for underlying values** and aspirations, and acknowledging them.

“I’m hearing that for you, fairness is a big issue when it comes to immigration.”

For Reds, it might be fairness related to those who waited years to come to the country legally. For Blues, it might be fairness to the Dreamers who were brought here by their parents and have grown up as Americans.

Talking Points for Helpers

Immigration talking points (**Red perspective**):

- You want the country to get control of the border

- You worry about jobs Americans lose to people coming illegally, but you're ambivalent about deporting all
- You're open to permanent residency for some, but adamantly oppose rewarding them with citizenship
- If building a wall would help, you're for it, although you want to know the costs

Immigration talking points (**Blue perspective**):

- You want a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have not committed crimes
- You see them as contributors to society who deserve a chance to stay here legally and out of the shadows
- You're especially concerned about the "Dreamers" whose parents brought them here
- But you do support border controls

Gun rights/Gun control talking points (**Red perspective**):

- You see gun violence as a problem in this country that needs to be addressed
- But the Second Amendment gives people the right to own guns
- Most gun regulations won't help because bad guys will always find a way to get a gun, and good guys will lack self-protection
- ..and regulations may be first steps towards taking away legitimate gun rights
- Still, there are some common sense reforms like requiring universal background checks and screening for dangerous people who should not own guns
- You're cautiously open to some regulations on automatic rifles

Gun control talking points (**Blue perspective**):

- You see gun violence as a huge problem in this country, and one of the big causes is too many guns
- European countries don't have the gun violence we do
- There is no place for assault weapons in the hands of ordinary people
- Guns don't protect people; in reality, they put people at risk from suicide, mental illness, accidents, and domestic shootings
- Still, you realize that the second amendment gives people the right to have guns
- We need sensible regulation that respects gun rights