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Patty was shocked. She was a good student and usually made all A’s and B’s. Not this time. Her history quiz was marked C-! How could this have happened?

She went to her teacher and said, “Excuse me, Mr. Raines. I have a question.”

“Sure, Patty, what is it?” replied her teacher.

“How did I get such a bad mark on the quiz? I studied hard, and I knew the answers to your questions,” Patty said.

“Patty, you didn’t answer my question at all,” said her teacher.

Patty was confused. “But I gave a lot of reasons why the first Thanksgiving was important to the Pilgrims.”

“That wasn’t the question I asked,” explained Mr. Raines. “I asked you to write about why the first Thanksgiving was important to the Native Americans!”

“Are you sure?” asked Patty with surprise.

“Well, that’s the question all the other kids answered.” Mr. Raines said kindly.

Patty gulped. “Guess I didn’t listen very well, did I?”

Mr. Raines smiled, “I guess not, but I’m sure you will next time.”
Hi. My name is Slim Goodbody.

The story you just read is not unusual. Many people make mistakes because they do not know how to listen well. Luckily, you can improve your listening ability. You can learn a terrific skill called active listening.

Active listening will help you
• do better in school;
• get along better with your friends;
• make family meal times more interesting.

Want to find out more? Read on!
Before you can understand active listening, you need to learn how hearing works.

Sound begins with **vibrations**. When something vibrates, it moves back and forth. For example, when you pluck guitar strings, they vibrate. As the strings vibrate, they move the nearby **atoms** in the air. These atoms cause other atoms to vibrate. The vibrations form a sound wave that moves out from the strings.

An image might help you understand this. Imagine you dropped a stone into a pool of water. The stone creates a ripple that moves out from where the stone fell. A sound wave moves out from its source in the same way.