

Active Listening

Active Listening means being deeply engaged in and attentive to what the speaker is saying. It requires far more listening than talking. Your goal as an active listener is to truly understand the speaker’s perspective (regardless of whether you agree) and to communicate that understanding back to the speaker so that he or she can confirm the accuracy of your understanding.

What It's Called	How To Do It	Why Do It	Examples of Active Listening Responses
Paraphrasing	Restate the same information, using different words to more concisely reflect what the speaker said.	Tests your understanding of what is heard by communicating your understanding of what the speaker said. Allows the speaker to 'hear' and focus on his or her own thoughts. Allows the speaker to see that you are trying to understand his/her message and perceptions. Encourages the speaker to continue speaking.	What I’m hearing is...” “Sounds like you are saying...” “I’m not sure I’m with you but... If I’m hearing you correctly.... So, as you see it... It sounds like what’s most important to you is . . .
Clarifying	Invite the speaker to explain some aspect of what she or he said.	Gives the speaker the opportunity to elaborate and clarify what was said. Gives you the opportunity to identify anything that is unclear and to check the accuracy of your understanding	I am not sure I quite understand; or do you mean that...? Can you say more about . . . ? You have given me a lot of information, let me see if I’ve got it all...”
Reflecting	Relaying what was said back to the speaker to show that you understand how he/she feels about something.	Deepens understanding of feelings and content. Allows the speaker to see that you are trying to understand his/her message and perceptions.	“I get the sense that you might be feeling afraid about what might happen if . . . “ To me, it sounds like you are frustrated about what was said, but I am wondering if you are also feeling a little hurt by it.” It seems like you felt confused and worried when that happened.” “So, you’re saying that you were feeling more frightened than angry.”
Summarizing	Identify, connect, and integrate key ideas and feelings in what the speaker said.	Helps both listener and speaker identify what is most important to the speaker.	Let me summarize what I heard so far. ... So, on one the hand... but on the other hand . . . I think I’ve heard several things that seem to be important to you, first____, second, second____, third_____.” “It sounds like there are two things really matter most to you . . . “

Examples of Roadblocks to Good Listening

Fixing	Evaluating	Diverting	Interrupting
Ordering Suggesting Advising Diagnosing	Judging Threatening Praising Condemning Taking sides Giving opinions	Reassuring Changing the subject Focusing on your own agenda Minimizing	Interjecting comments Not allowing speaker's own pace Tuning out Creating/responding to distractions Cross-examining

Tips for Active Listening

Do's	Don'ts
<p>Listen More than you talk</p> <p>Let the speaker finish before you respond.</p> <p>Ask open ended questions</p> <p>Remain attentive to what's being said</p> <p>Be aware of your own biases</p> <p>Manage your own emotions</p> <p>Be attentive to ideas and problema solving opportunities</p> <p>Give verbal and nonverbal messages that you are listening</p> <p>Listen for both feelings and content</p>	<p>Dominate the conversation</p> <p>Interrupt</p> <p>Finish the speaker's sentences</p> <p>Jump to conclusions</p> <p>Respond with blaming or accusatory language</p> <p>Become argumentative</p> <p>Demonstrate impatience or multitask</p> <p>Mentally compose your responses about what to say next</p> <p>Listen with biases or shut out new ideas</p>

A Cheat-Sheet for "Feeling" Words

Concerned	Unimportant	Stymied	Attacked
Desperate	Resentful	Hurt	Considered
Confused	Misunderstood	Astonished	Intruded upon
Angry	On the spot	Overwhelmed	Intimidated
Frustrated	Unimportant	Surprised	Ignored
Discouraged	Hopeless	Scared	Comforted
Annoyed	Encouraged	Terrified	Sad
Belittled	Confident	Upset	Anxious
Patronized	Envious	Uncertain	Disturbed
Put-Down	Dissatisfied	Important	Rejected
Understood	Worried	Guilty	In a bind
Turned off	Affectionate	Blamed	Delighted
Pleased	Resigned	Content	Infuriated
Uncomfortable	Tired	Shamed	Ripped-off
Resentful	Enthusiastic	Defensive	Betrayed
Misunderstood	Puzzled	Discounted	Concerned
On the spot	Threatened	Embarrassed	Joyful