

- targeted
- adaptable
- Primary
- Intermediate
- Middle
- Senior

Introduce the strategy

Practise the strategy

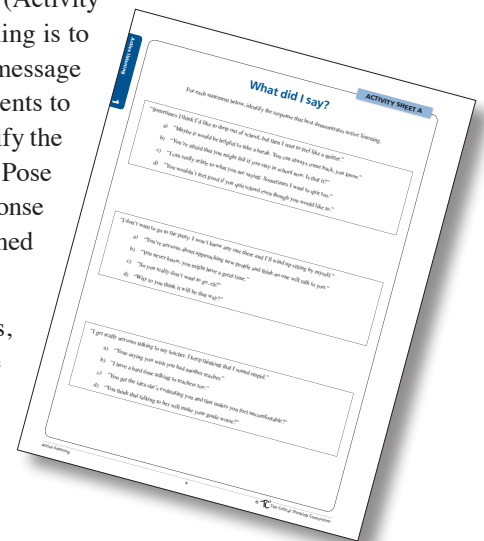
Active listening

listening and responding to another person in ways that demonstrate you fully understand what was said

- Objectives:**
- appreciate the value of active listening;
 - understand and use techniques for active listening.

Use the following activities to introduce the strategy

- Invite students to think of a time when they felt someone really listened to them. Ask students to share the details of the situation with a partner without necessarily disclosing the subject of the conversation (e.g., When did this happen? Where were you? Who listened to you? How did you know the person was listening? What difference did it make to be listened to?).
- Using similar questions, invite students to think of a time when they really listened to someone else. Ask students to share that experience with the same partner. Based on the shared stories, brainstorm the qualities of good listening. Pose the question: “How do you know someone is really listening to you?” Record student ideas on the board. Encourage students to identify the actions and words the listener used that helped the speaker feel heard (e.g., focusing on the speaker, attentive body language, asking questions).
- Introduce the term “active listening.” Invite students to brainstorm the difference between hearing and listening and to speculate on the difference between active and passive listening. Based on student input, create a definition of active listening (e.g., attentive listening to avoid misunderstanding).
- Suggest to students that active listening requires self-discipline because many individuals want to share their own stories or offer advice rather than listen to and understand what the speaker is saying.
- Provide students with a copy of *What did I say?* (Activity Sheet A). Point out that the goal of active listening is to let the speaker know you have heard his/her message and to fully understand the message. Invite students to read or role play each example in pairs and identify the response that best reflects the speaker’s message. Pose the question: “If you were the speaker, which response would best show that you had been carefully listened to?”
- After students read or role play the examples, compile the responses as a class. Identify the failure to actively listen evident in the ineffective responses (e.g., gave advice, told his or her own story, misinterpreted). Invite students to identify evidence, from the role plays, of the following techniques of active listening:
 - paying attention;
 - showing you are listening;
 - paraphrasing the speaker’s message;
 - asking questions;
 - suspending judgment;
 - responding respectfully.



- Introduce the term “paraphrasing”—one of the six important active-listening techniques. Explain that paraphrasing occurs when listeners repeat or “say back” the speaker’s message in their own words. Refer back to the examples on Activity Sheet A and discuss the common qualities of the paraphrased responses (e.g., identifies what the speaker feels, thinks, or wants). Discuss with students when you might paraphrase in a conversation and brainstorm possible paraphrasing language.
- Review the importance of paying attention and using attentive body language when listening actively. Remind students that these are the first steps in listening actively.
- Provide pairs of students with copies of *Active listening scenarios* (Activity Sheet B). Invite students to role play the scenarios. Instruct students to alternate speaking and listening roles with the listener responding by paraphrasing what the speaker has said. Provide students with a copy of *Paraphrasing starters* (Activity Sheet C) to support them in paraphrasing the speaker’s message. If possible, encourage students to carry on the conversation beyond one paraphrased response.
- Introduce the Student Resource, *Active listening*. Review each of the elements: purpose, strategy, sample, and self-assessment rubric. Discuss when this strategy might be useful in both in school and in real-life situations. Encourage students to refer to this resource when using the strategy in the future.
- Invite students to view the YouTube video, *The Tale of Sir Launcelot*, a humorous parody set in medieval times that depicts a conversation between a father, a son and two guards. It is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deFfeIVb2p0&feature=fvw>. After viewing the clip, discuss as a class examples of active listening and examples of poor listening evident in the video.
- Invite students to work in groups to develop role plays that illustrate active listening.
- At appropriate times over the ensuing several weeks, encourage students to use this strategy in regular classroom situations, including the following:
 - listening to and clarifying instructions;
 - listening to a presentation and checking their understanding;
 - helping a friend solve a problem;
 - participating in group problem solving and decision making;
 - solving or avoiding a conflict with another person.

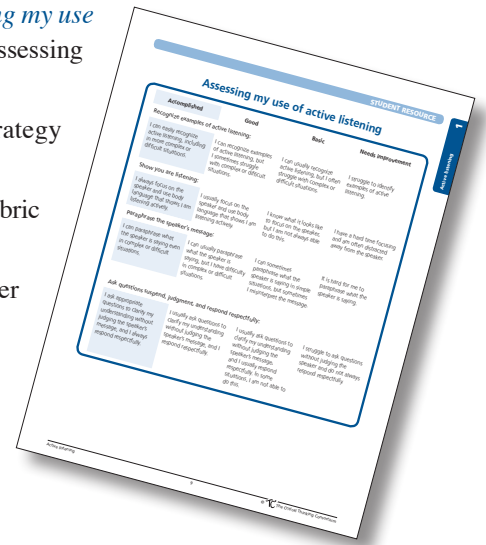
**Reinforce
the strategy**

**Apply the strategy to
everyday teaching**



Assess student understanding

- Encourage students to refer to the rubric *Assessing my use of active listening* (Student Resource) when self-assessing their use of this strategy:
 - Allow students opportunities to apply the strategy two or three times without evaluation.
 - Guide students in interpreting and using the rubric to assess their own responses.
 - Encourage students to use the rubric whenever they use this strategy.
- To use the rubric for teacher evaluation of student work, remove the first person (student) reference from each descriptor.



What did I say?

For each statement below, identify the response that best demonstrates active listening.

“Sometimes I think I’d like to drop out of school, but then I start to feel like a quitter.”

- a) “Maybe it would be helpful to take a break. You can always come back, you know.”
- b) “You’re afraid that you might fail if you stay in school now. Is that it?”
- c) “I can really relate to what you are saying. Sometimes I want to quit too.”
- d) “You wouldn’t feel good if you quit school even though you would like to.”

“I don’t want to go to the party. I won’t know anyone there and I’ll wind up sitting by myself.”

- a) “You’re nervous about approaching new people and think no one will talk to you.”
- b) “You never know, you might have a great time.”
- c) “So you really don’t want to go, eh?”
- d) “Why do you think it will be that way?”

“I get really nervous talking to my teacher. I keep thinking that I sound stupid.”

- a) “You’re saying you wish you had another teacher.”
- b) “I have a hard time talking to teachers too.”
- c) “You get the idea she’s evaluating you and that makes you feel uncomfortable?”
- d) “You think that talking to her will make your grade worse?”

Active listening scenarios

Friend speaking to friend

"I can't believe it. First my teacher said my answers were too skimpy. So I gave her more information. Now she tells me I'm being too wordy."

Student speaking to teacher

"I did really badly on my math test. I think I should just give up. I'm no good at math. I studied and thought I was prepared. Maybe I just can't get it."

Teenager speaking to parent

"You are so impossible. Everyone is allowed to go to the party. It's not like I'm six years old. You just don't want me to have any life at all!"

Friend speaking to friend

"I'm really starting to hate my part time job. Every day I do the same mindless, boring work. But if I quit, I might not find another job."

Friend speaking to friend

"Have you heard from Sam? He hasn't called me in ages. I think he must be mad at me or something."

Parent speaking to son or daughter

"You can't go to a party that is not supervised. I trust you but you don't know who might show up. If trouble happens, you could be in the middle of it."

Son or daughter speaking to parent

"I can't take this any more. Sharing a room with her is impossible. She snoops in my stuff and seems to think what's mine is hers. I need some privacy!"

Friend speaking to friend

"My friend wants me to go on a trip with his family. I really don't feel comfortable going but I don't want my friend to think I'm a wimp."

Student speaking to teacher

"I can't work with Susan. It's not fair to always put us in the same group. She argues about everything and I end up doing all the work."

Teacher speaking to students

"Pick up your backpacks from the front of the bus. Go to the work station printed on your name tag. When you complete that station, move clockwise to the next station. At lunch time, meet by the blue tent."

Paraphrasing starters

“So, you feel ...”

“You think ...”

“You wonder ...”

“It sounds like you ...”

“What you mean ...”

“As I understand it, you felt that ...”

“You’re sort of saying that ...”

“If I’m hearing you correctly ...”

“To me it seems like you are saying ...”

“I’m not sure that I’m with you, but ...”

“As you see it ...”

“Could it be that ...”

“I wonder if ...”

“Is it possible that ...”

“I get the impression that ...”

“Perhaps you are feeling ...”

“Let me see if I get what you are saying ...”

“It seems to me that ...”

“As I get it, you think ...”

“You mean ...”

“Maybe you feel ...”

“From where I stand ...”

“Let me see if I’m with you ...”

Active listening

listening and responding to another person in ways that demonstrate you fully understand what was said

Purpose

This strategy helps me focus on and really understand what someone is saying.

For a sample use of the strategy, see the next page.

Instructions

- Pay attention:
 - Look at the speaker.
 - Ignore distractions. Give the speaker your undivided attention.
 - Notice the speaker’s body language.
 - Avoid the tendency to think about your own views or opinions on what the speaker is saying.
 - Remember that listening is about understanding the speaker.
- Show you are listening:
 - Use body language that shows you are paying attention. Lean forward, nod occasionally, and avoid closed body language like crossing your arms.
 - Let the speaker finish. Don’t interrupt.
- Paraphrase:
 - In your own words, repeat back what you heard the speaker say. Focus on the message the speaker is sending and interpret the feelings the speaker has expressed (e.g., Sounds like you are saying ...).
- Ask questions:
 - Think about what is being said and ask questions to clarify key points (e.g., What do you mean when you say ...).
- Suspend judgment:
 - Don’t judge what the speaker is saying. Avoid the temptation to offer advice or dismiss what the speaker’s message is.
- Respond respectfully:
 - As a listener you are gaining information. Treat the speaker with respect.

Adapted from: <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>.

SAMPLE

use of the strategy

Active listening

Speaker:

"I'm really starting to hate my part time job. Every day I do the same mindless, boring work. But if I quit, I might not find another job."

"Yeah. I have to have a job but I just hate doing the same thing over and over again."

"A job where I have more to do with people or have some responsibility would be a lot better."

Active listener:

"Sounds like you don't like your job but you're afraid to quit."

"You want a job that is more interesting."

Assessing my use of active listening

Accomplished	Good	Basic	Needs improvement
Recognize examples of active listening:			
I can easily recognize active listening, including in more complex or difficult situations.	I can recognize examples of active listening, but I sometimes struggle with complex or difficult situations.	I can usually recognize active listening, but I often struggle with complex or difficult situations.	I struggle to identify examples of active listening.
Show you are listening:			
I always focus on the speaker and use body language that shows I am listening actively.	I usually focus on the speaker and use body language that shows I am listening actively.	I know what it looks like to focus on the speaker, but I am not always able to do this.	I have a hard time focusing and am often distracted away from the speaker.
Paraphrase the speaker's message:			
I can paraphrase what the speaker is saying even in complex or difficult situations.	I can usually paraphrase what the speaker is saying, but I have difficulty in complex or difficult situations.	I can sometimes paraphrase what the speaker is saying in simple situations, but sometimes I misinterpret the message.	It is hard for me to paraphrase what the speaker is saying.
Ask questions, suspend judgment, and respond respectfully:			
I ask appropriate questions to clarify my understanding without judging the speaker's message, and I always respond respectfully.	I usually ask questions to clarify my understanding without judging the speaker's message, and I respond respectfully.	I usually ask questions to clarify my understanding without judging the speaker's message, and I usually respond respectfully. In some situations, I am not able to do this.	I struggle to ask questions without judging the speaker and do not always respond respectfully.