



Unit: Listening
Skill 15: Active Listening
Activity A: How To Listen

Activity Skills:

Small group interaction, listening and discussion.

Leadership Skills:

Being able to actively listen.

Suggested Level:

Beginning

Time:

30 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Worksheets (provided).

Do Ahead:

- Make copies of worksheet

Source:

Logan Booth
 AmeriCorps VISTA

Based On:

Community Boards of San Francisco: School Initiatives Program *Active Listening Techniques*

BACKGROUND:

It is said of some people that they have “selective hearing”. By this it is meant that the person only hears what they want to hear, and disregards the rest. “Selective hearing” is rarely, if ever, referred to as a positive quality, and is usually the result of a common mistake. The mistake is that most people with this troublesome “selective hearing” are not listening at all – they are simply waiting until it is their turn to speak.

“Selective hearing” is an extreme case. Most of us do not suffer from this problem – not completely. However, most people do show some signs of “waiting to speak” rather than “listening intently”, on an everyday basis. There are numerous theories about how we can learn to listen better. Generally, it is thought the best way to listen is actively – through “Active Listening”. According to the Community Boards of San Francisco: School Initiatives Program, Active Listening is comprised of six actions taken while someone else is speaking. These actions are:

- **Encouraging**
- **Clarifying**
- **Restating**
- **Reflecting**
- **Summarizing**
- **Validating**

WHAT TO DO:

Begin by passing out worksheets to each participant. Discuss active listening for 5-10 minutes, reviewing and explaining each of the six actions that should be taken while listening.

Split participants into two groups, and have them pair off with a person in the opposite group. When paired off, the groups begin by having one person read the first paragraph on the worksheet. While this person reads, their partner will engage in each of the six active listening techniques. When the first partner finishes reading, the pair repeats, switching roles and reading from the second paragraph.

(NOTE: You may want to remind students that it is okay to ask their partners specific questions about the passage they are reading – questions that may not be answered by the passage itself. The person being asked can just make up an answer or say they don’t know, making the activity into a bit of a role play activity as well. The important part is for them to use the active listening techniques.)

Skill 15: Active Listening

Activity A: How To Listen

Notes:

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- Was it difficult to ask questions while your partner was speaking?
- Did you feel like you were interrupting?
- While you were reading, did it seem like the other person was listening more than you were used to being listened to?
- In order to use all six of the active listening techniques, could you do anything *but* listen intently?
- Is it always necessary to use all six techniques?

Apply:

- In the past, when have you been speaking and you knew the person you were with wasn't really listening? How did you feel?
- Can you recall any time that you had trouble listening to someone and these techniques would have been useful?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

For the next week, try to use these active listening techniques when talking to people. If you like, start a small journal or just a few pieces of paper. Record what difference these techniques make on your ability to remember what people have said, and how people respond when speaking to you.

Resources And Web Links:

Community Board of San Francisco: School Initiatives Program, [Active Listening Techniques](#)

<http://www.csufresno.edu/mediatormentors/training/materials/listening-tech.pdf>

4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum, [It's all in the Family](#), <http://4h.uwex.edu/pubs/showdoc.cfm>