

Active Listening Steps

Active listening is a communication technique used in counselling, training and conflict resolution, which requires the listener to feed back what they hear to the speaker, by way of re-stating or paraphrasing what they have heard in their own words, to confirm what they have heard and moreover, to confirm the understanding of both parties.

When interacting, people often "wait to speak" rather than listening attentively. They might also be distracted. Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others, focusing attention on the "function" of communicating objectively as opposed to focusing on "forms", passive expression or subjectivity.

Although the feedback step is at the heart of active listening, to be effective, each of the following steps must taken:

1. **Eye contact.** Look at the person, and stop other things you are doing.
2. Listen not just to the words, but the **feeling content**.
3. **Be sincerely interested** in what the other person is talking about.
4. **Restate** what the person said.
5. **Ask clarification** questions once in a while.
6. Be aware of your own feelings and **strong opinions**.
7. If you have to state your views, say those only **after you have listened** and **don't attack** the other's opinion.
8. **Be attentive.** You have to make an effort to listen carefully. Don't daydream and don't talk.
9. Think about the **main point** the speaker is trying to make. To remember it, write it down. If you are in class, write a summary of the information when the speaker has finished his/her presentation.
10. **Paraphrase** or restate in your own words what the speaker is saying.
11. Try to **leave emotion out** when you're listening. Try not to argue back in your mind. These things distract you from what the speaker is saying.
12. Ask for **clarification** if you don't understand a point the speaker is making. Be polite.
13. **Avoid distractions.** No cellphones, TV, books or headphones. Sit close to the speaker, if possible.

Performing the steps effectively depends on skill in giving appropriate feedback and sending appropriate verbal and non-verbal signals.

Verbal Signals

- 'I'm listening' cues
- Disclosures
- Validating Statements
- Statements of Support
- Reflection/mirroring Statements

Non-Verbal Signals

- Good eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Silence
- Touching