



## Active Listening.

It will take time and patience, but active listening is a skill that can be acquired and developed with practice.

'Active listening' involves effort. It requires full concentration to hear not just what is being said but the nuances, the undertones, and the subtext.

Active listening involves listening with all senses. Face to face it's important that the 'active listener' is also 'seen' to be listening.

Interest can be conveyed by using both verbal and non-verbal messages such as staying present, keeping eye contact, nodding your head and smiling, recognising them by saying 'Yes' or simply 'Mmm hmm.' Such 'feedback' will encourage the speaker and make them

feel more at ease. This sense of engagement helps promote more open and honest communication.

Listeners should remain non-judgmental and neutral. This means forming unbiased opinions and not taking sides, especially early on in the conversation.

Active listening is about patience and being present. Pauses and short periods of silence are okay and can also be useful tactics. Listeners should not interrupt or interject with questions, or whenever there are a few seconds of silence. Active listening means giving the other person time to explore their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

### EXERCISE 10.3 ACTIVE LISTENING GUIDE

(Source - Active Listening Exercise by Institute for Charitable Giving)

In this exercise, we rate your active listening skills across some communication areas. Use the rating scale to the right to score the statements.

### RATING SCALE

- Always 5
- Almost Always 4
- Usually 3
- Sometimes 2
- Seldom - 1
- Never -(minus) 2

### TOTAL SCORE - ACTIVE LISTENING

- 108 – 120 Outstanding
- 83 – 107 You are a good listener
- 58 – 82 You are a fair listener
- Below 58 Work Needed
- What was your total score? \_\_\_\_

CONCENTRATION		
1.	When I am talking with others, my mind is completely absorbed by what they are saying and doesn't wander.	
2.	I hold onto my comments and opinions until the other person is finished talking, even if my comments have direct relevance to what he or she is saying.	
3.	I do not let interruptions, like ringing phones, my emails or people walking by distracting my attention from what the person is saying.	
4.	When I talk with someone, I have a real recollection of what he/she said as opposed to what I said.	

ACKNOWLEDGING		
5.	I build on previous responses by asking to follow up questions to statements just made.	
6.	I make certain that the other person knows that I am listening by giving a brief and encouraging acknowledgments such as "I see" and "That's interesting."	
7.	In a discussion, more than half my time is spent listening rather than talking.	
8.	I am mindful about not sending the wrong nonverbal message, moving to a closed body position, impatiently tapping fingers on the desk and so on.	
STRUCTURING		
9.	Before a meeting, I establish my objectives and prepare myself to listen.	
10.	When talking with others, I take mental notes of major ideas, key points, and supporting reasons	
11.	I ask for clarification or elaboration regarding the speaker's viewpoint – to ensure proper interpretation and complete understanding of the rationale.	
12.	I attend to all promised actions, however great or small following a discussion.	
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING		
13.	When I talk with someone, I encourage a two-way flow of communication by asking open-ended questions.	
14.	I let others know that I am trying to understand what they are saying by using phrases such as "tell me more about that" or "can you give me an example?"	
15.	I ask people what they expect from a given action or relationship.	
16.	I prepare for my meeting in advance by reading, reviewing and finding out as much as possible about the person I'll be meeting with.	
SENSITIVITY		
17.	When talking with others, I read their body language as well as listen to their words to fully interpret what they are telling me.	
18.	When you are effectively listening, the nonverbal communication the person is sending me is as important as the verbal, and I am alert to that – facial expressions, posture, eye contact, tapping fingers, light facial muscles, frowning, etc.	
19.	I listen to more than the words themselves – I hear the emotional tone of the person, the pitch, the subtle variations that might indicate displeasure, etc.	
20.	I try to read what's going on behind their spoken words by asking myself what they might be feeling, why they are saying it, and what is implied by what they say.	
PERSONAL CONCERNS		
21.	I make certain that the physical environment is appropriate for effective conversation-- music is not too loud, the temperature is not too hot or cold, etc.	
22.	I care greatly about people and those I meet and talk with can sense that in my listening.	
23.	I'm careful to avoid anything that provides a negative connotation - raising an eyebrow, looking away, rolling my eyes, drumming my fingers.	
24.	If the person has negative feelings about the institution or me, I do not become defensive.	
TOTAL SCORE		



Is this reflective of your current active listening skills? Why?

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What showed up as your strongest rating?

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What areas require further development?

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Are there current workplace situations where this truly reflects these weak areas?

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What can you do differently in these situations to improve these areas which will result in better active listening?

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