



Active Listening Skills–Top 10 Best Practices

- 1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact**

Show your attentiveness through open body language. Look at them to signal that you are paying full attention.
- 2. Be attentive**

Avoid distractions like shuffling papers, typing on your computer or listening to other conversations. Don't be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.
- 3. Keep an open mind**

Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things they tell you. Try not to make assumptions about what the speaker is thinking and don't jump to conclusions.
- 4. Don't interrupt**

We all think and speak at different rates. If you are a quick thinker and an agile talker, it is your responsibility to relax your pace for the slower, more thoughtful communicator.
When listening to someone talk about a problem, refrain from suggesting solutions unless you are asked for it.
- 5. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.**

Concentrate on what is being said, even if it bores you. If your thoughts start to wander, bring your focus back to the speaker. When it's your turn to listen, don't spend the time planning what to say next. You can't rehearse and listen at the same time.
- 6. Repeat back what you heard**

Paraphrase what you heard back to the speaker. If the speaker agrees that is what he or she intended to say, you can move on. If not, the speaker needs to reword their statement until you really understand.
- 7. Ask clarifying questions**

When you don't understand something, ask the speaker to explain it to you. But rather than interrupt, wait until the speaker pauses. Then say something like, "Back up a second. I didn't understand what you just said about..."
- 8. Put yourself in their shoes**

Empathy is the heart and soul of good listening. To experience empathy, you have to put yourself in the other person's place and allow yourself to feel what it is like to be him or her at that moment. It takes energy and concentration, but it



is a generous and helpful thing to do, and it facilitates communication like nothing else does.

9. **Show that you are listening**

Show that you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting the speaker's feelings. "You must be thrilled!" "What a terrible ordeal for you." "I can see that you are confused." If the speaker's feelings are hidden or unclear, then occasionally paraphrase the content of the message. Or just nod and show your understanding through appropriate facial expressions and an occasional well-timed "hmmm" or "uh huh."

10. **Be curious**

People who are naturally curious see conversations as learning opportunities. They are always looking to discover or learn something new and see everyone they talk to as having the potential to teach them something.