

Active Listening Techniques

Active Listening skills are an essential component of effective communication. This handout provides you with active listening techniques and communication enhancers and blockers that can help you improve your active listening skills.

SIX ACTIVE LISTENING TECHNIQUES

TYPE OF STATEMENT	PURPOSE	TO ACHIEVE PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
Listening	Seek first to understand, then to be understood	Be attentive Use body language which signifies your listening	Mirroring
Encouraging	To convey interest To Keep the person talking	Do not agree or disagree Use noncommittal words and positive tone of voice	I see Uh-huh That's interesting
Restating	To show that you are listening and to check understanding To confirm facts	Use your own words to restate speaker's basic idea List facts	If I understand, your idea is ... In other words, ... So these are the important items:
Ask Questions	To better understand and clarify what you are hearing	Ask questions that help you get more information	The 5 W's: Who What, When, Where, and Why
Reflecting	To show that you are listening and to check understanding. To let others know you understand their feelings.	Restate the speaker's feelings	So you feel that ... It sounds as though you were pretty disturbed ...
Summarizing	To pull together important ideas, facts, etc. To establish a basis for further discussion. To review progress.	Organize then restate, reflect, recall, major ideas and feelings	These seem to be the key ideas so far To sum up the way you feel, I'd say ... There seems to be 3 key items to ...

COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS & ENHANCERS

COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS	COMMUNICATION ENHANCERS
Blaming and attacking	Asking for more information and problem solving together
Being distracted or using other body language that is non-attentive	Making eye contact, leaning toward the other person, giving full attention
Dismissing or making light of someone's problem	Showing empathy, validating the other person's feelings
Interrupting	Staying silent until the person is finished speaking
Lecturing/moralizing	Withholding judgment
Yes ... but statements	Yes ... and statements

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING SKILLS

The ability to ask effective questions is a key skill for effective communication.

OPEN QUESTIONS

These begin with "what, why, when, where, how and who." They are an excellent way of opening up a topic of conversation. Tell me what happened ...? How do you see the problem ...?

PROBING QUESTIONS

These are questions that follow-up with a point made. What exactly do you mean by ...?

CLOSED/DIRECT QUESTIONS

These can be answered by 'yes' and 'no' or with short factual answers. Do you agree? Is that right?

SUMMARIZING, REFLECTING, AND CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Used to double check what the respondent has said. As I understand, we agreed... is that so?