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Can You Hear Me Now?

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Active Listening

There's hearing, and then there's true listening. Students may think they're the same—but they're not. In this lesson, students learn what it takes to be an active listener, which is a critical communication skill.

Why it matters?

Even adults know that listening can be hard. For children, often the task is extra difficult, particularly if they don't know what real listening requires. Teaching students how to actively listen yields benefits that extend beyond the classroom:

- ✓ The ability to listen is a key to building the communication skills students will need as they move through school into adulthood. Conflict resolution helps students develop empathy and learn to see things from the perspective of someone else.
- ✓ Students who learn to be active listeners tend also to be better communicators and problem solvers. They also tend to retain information better because they are not as easily distracted.
- ✓ Working on listening skills can improve a student's attention span and ability to concentrate.
- ✓ Summarizing and paraphrasing skills are stronger when a student practices active listening.
- ✓ Being an active listener improves relationships because it makes people feel understood and cared for.
- ✓ Active listening results in fewer misunderstandings, improved productivity and more self-reliance.

Bottom line: Without active listening, clear communication simply can't happen. Knowing how to listen to others is a critical life skill that will help students become successful adults.

Goal for the lesson: Equip students with the skills they need to be active, engaged listeners who accurately hear information and act on what they've heard.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 45 minutes

Materials: Class supply of both handouts, self-sticking notes, sheet of chart paper labeled "Listen Up!", paper

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Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Ask students to list all the sounds they hear in the classroom. Invite them to walk around the room as they compile their lists; challenge them to list as many sounds as possible.

2. Provide time for students to share their lists with the class or in small groups and see how many different sounds careful listening yielded. Then talk about any difficulties they had concentrating or dealing with distractions that impaired their listening.

Whole-Group and Small-Group Activity

1. Ask each student to turn to a partner and together answer this question: "What is the difference between hearing and listening?"

2. Provide time for students to share their ideas as you write them on the board. Point out that just hearing the words someone says is not the same as listening. Active listening means the listener not only hears what the speaker says, but also understands what the speaker is trying to communicate.

3. Distribute copies of the "Can You Hear Me Now?" handout of active listening techniques. Go over the information with students. Then ask a student to come to the front of the room. Ask him or her to describe a favorite memory. As he or she talks, model active listening by making eye contact, repeating points back to the speaker, asking questions for clarification, etc.

4. After several minutes, end the conversation with the student and ask the class to identify how you modeled active listening. If necessary, ask the student volunteer to describe how he or she knew you were really listening and understood what the student was saying.

5. Divide the class into pairs and give each twosome the "Question Challenge" handout. Go over the directions with the class. Then have the student pairs complete the activity. **For younger students,** ask a student volunteer the questions on the handout. Then challenge the rest of the class to repeat his or her answers after you have finished asking the questions.

Partner Activity

1. List the conversation topics below on the board and divide students into pairs.
    - fun physical activities to do on the weekend
    - the first day of school
    - the best pet to have
    - how to make friends
    - favorite sports
    - ways to make yourself feel better when you're sad
    - favorite things to do on a rainy or snowy day

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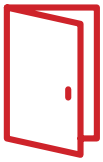
2. Direct each twosome to choose a topic from the board and have a short conversation about it. Explain to students that when one child is speaking, the partner will write down what he or she hears, and vice versa.

3. When students have completed the conversation, have them check each other's work to see if they heard each other correctly. Then have them practice reviewing their conversations aloud, using the information that they wrote down. Students will see that if they don't listen carefully, they can easily mishear or misunderstand important information.

4. Group each twosome with another duo and have them share their dialogues.



Exit Activity

Have each student label a sticky note with one thing he or she heard about active listening during the lesson. Post the students' notes on a large class chart labeled "Listen Up!" Refer to the chart throughout the year to review how to be an active listener.

Take-Home Task

Challenge each student to practice active listening at home. The next time an adult gives instructions, challenge the child to listen carefully and understand the message correctly the first time. Listening is a skill that both adults and children need to practice.

Teacher Notes

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Can You Hear Me Now?

Ways to Be an Active Listener

- Make eye contact with the speaker.
- Show the speaker you are listening by nodding, smiling and focusing on what he or she is saying.
- Ask questions if you are confused.
- Don’t interrupt the speaker.
- Repeat what the speaker said in your own words to make sure you understand the complete message.

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Name _____

Date _____

Question Challenge

Directions for two students:

1. Student A asks Student B each of the questions in the box, using active listening techniques.

2. Student B asks Student A to repeat back his or her answers to the questions.

3. Students switch roles and repeat Steps 1 and 2.

4. Each student completes the information at the bottom of the page to gauge his or her active listening skills.

Questions to ask:

- What is your favorite physical activity and why is it your favorite?
- What did you wear to school yesterday?
- What healthy habit do you practice every day or almost every day?
- What would you like to do as a career when you are an adult?
- If you could change your first name, what name would you choose?
- Who are three famous people you'd like to meet?
- What is your favorite musical group or singer?
- What movie would you see again if you could?

So how did you do?

1. Rank how well you were able to remember your partner's answers to the questions. Use this code: 1 = not well at all; 2 = okay; 3 = excellent:_____

2. What active listening steps did you use while listening to your partner? _____

_____

3. What active listening steps do you think you need to improve on? _____

_____

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