SKILL TREE™

7: *The Power of Active Listening*

7–12

A 7–12 Lesson on Paying Attention, Building Trust, and Strengthening Understanding

Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson teaches students the underrated but powerful skill of **active listening**, which means being fully present and focused when someone else is speaking. In a fast-paced world full of distractions, learning to listen with purpose is a competitive advantage that builds trust, empathy, and stronger relationships.

Active listening is more than hearing. It's about showing that we care, asking thoughtful questions, and tuning in with both our mind and body. For teens navigating friendships, family dynamics, and group collaboration, this skill becomes a daily tool for success.

When students listen actively, they strengthen their **personal competitive advantage** by creating deeper connections, reducing conflict, and gaining insight that helps them grow into the person they want to be. It's also a direct contributor to the kind of connected, respected **lifestyle** they want to live.

This lesson includes:

- **A Real-World Scenario that illustrates active listening in action**
- **8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups**
- **8 Journal Prompts (draw or write)**
- **10 hands-on and reflective listening Activities**
- **A printable Worksheet for students to practice and apply listening strategies**

CAREER TREE®

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Real-Life Scenario

Your friend is talking, but your mind is on your phone. You nod along, but you're not really there. Later, they say, "You didn't even hear what I said."

You realize: you were hearing the words, but not actually *listening*.

Another time, someone gives you their full attention. They lean in. They ask questions. They remember what you said the next day.

It feels different.

Active listening isn't just polite. It's powerful. It makes people feel seem, heard, and valued. And that's a skill worth mastering.



Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does active listening mean to you?**
   Follow-up: How is it different from just "hearing"?
2. **What makes it hard to listen actively in today's world?**
   Follow-up: What can we do to overcome those distractions?
3. **How does it feel when someone truly listens to you?**
   Follow-up: What do they do that shows they're really paying attention?
4. **What are some nonverbal signs of active listening?**
   Follow-up: Which ones do you use most often—or forget to use?
5. **When people don't listen well, what happens to relationships, teamwork, or trust?**
   Follow-up: Have you seen this happen before?
6. **Why do we sometimes interrupt or plan our response instead of listening fully?**
   Follow-up: What helps us stay focused on the speaker instead?
7. **How does active listening build your personal competitive advantage?**
   Follow-up: Where in your life would this skill make a big difference?
8. **What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?**
   Follow-up: How can listening better help build that kind of life and connection?

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Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their responses depending on learning style or preference.)

1. **Write or draw about a time someone listened to you deeply. How did it feel?**
2. **Describe a moment when you realized you weren't listening well. What distracted you?**
3. **Sketch or list the "body language" of a good listener.**
4. **What helps you stay focused when someone is talking?**
5. **Write about a time when you felt misunderstood, and how listening could've helped.**
6. **What's one place in your life where you want to listen better? Why?**
7. **Create your "Active Listening Toolkit." What goes in it?**
8. **How can active listening grow your personal competitive advantage?**

Activities

1. **Listening Pairs**
   In partners, one student shares a 2-minute story. The listener must repeat the key points and ask one follow-up question. Then switch roles.
2. **Distraction Awareness Demo**
   Have a conversation while music plays or phones buzz. Reflect on how hard it is to stay present and what helps.
3. **Face Me, Focus Me**
   Teach inclusive body language: sit toward the speaker, eye contact when it feels respectful, nodding, and still hands.
4. **Listening vs. Responding Game**
   One student shares something personal or important. The partner practices only listening—no advice, no interruptions.
5. **Nonverbal Listening Signals Chart**
   Students create a visual reminder of ways to show they're listening: eye contact, posture, stillness, silence.
6. **"Just Listen" Rounds**
   In small groups, students take turns speaking for 1 minute on a topic while everyone else practices silent, present listening.
7. **Emotional Echo Practice**
   After hearing a story, the listener reflects back not just the words but the feeling (e.g., "It sounds like that made you frustrated.")
8. **Interrupt-Free Debate**
   Host a structured conversation where students must let others finish before responding. Reflect on how it changes the tone.
9. **Listening for Clarity Challenge**
   Give a set of complex directions once only. Have students follow them to the best of their ability. Debrief the power of attention.
10. **My Listening Goals Contract**
    Students choose 1–2 behaviors they want to improve and commit to practicing them for one week.

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My Active Listening Plan

Name:

Helpful Words:

- **Active Listening** = giving full attention to someone with my ears, eyes, and attitude
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = the habits that help me connect, understand, and succeed with others

Directions:
Use **words or drawings** to reflect and plan your growth.

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. **One challenge I have when listening is:**

2. **A moment I listened well recently was:**

3. **Here's what I can do to become a stronger listener:**

4. **My Active Listening Superpower helps me do these things:**

5. **One setting where I want to listen better is:**

6. **Active listening helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:**

7. **This is how listening well supports the lifestyle I want to live:**

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