



# Social Awareness

## Active Listening vs. Passive Hearing

### Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

We all need someone to listen to us sometimes. Whether we are having a bad day and need to vent, or we have something exciting that we want to share. But did you know that listening is a skill that we can all work on improving? *Active listening* is a way to listen attentively and withhold judgment and advice. This helps to make the speaker feel valued and heard. Isn't it the worst when you tell a friend something and they seem disinterested? Or if they try to "one up" you? Or act like they are "too busy" to listen?

Some ways to be an effective active listener are:

1. Be nonjudgmental
2. Have patience
3. Make eye contact
4. Ask questions
5. Reflect on what the speaker told you
6. Summarize

The opposite of active listening is passive hearing. Passive hearing is when you are listening, but you are not giving the speaker your full attention. You might be thinking of all the things you want to say when they finish talking or thinking about something else entirely. This type of listening can lead to one sided conversation and make the speaker feel like they aren't respected.

This strategy reinforces the skills taught in the high school student-directed strategy ***Active Listening.***

### Key Takeaways:

- Students will understand the difference between active listening and passive hearing.
- Students will work effectively in pairs, taking turns and reading social cues.
- Students will recognize times when active listening is the appropriate response.

### Duration + Materials:

- 30 Minutes

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Active-** Engaging or ready to engage.
- **Passive-** Accepting or allow what happens or what others do.



## Activity:

1. After introducing the difference between active and passive hearing, break students into pairs. (If necessary, can be a small group of 3 or teacher can pair with a student.)
  - a. Teachers should assign groups instead of allowing students to pick, this ensures that students are split equally, and no student is left out.
2. Assign students a role as either an “active listener” or the speaker.
  - a. Students will switch roles after a 5-minute role play.
3. Students who are playing the speaker will be given a topic to speak about. Topics can be found in the *Supplemental Materials* section.
  - a. Students who are the speakers should be encouraged to not only speak about the topic but ask for advice and “play the role” and “vent” to the active listener.
4. After 5 minutes the students will switch roles and switch “stances” on the topic they were given.
  - a. Remind students before switching that this is not a debate, this is a test of active listening. Sometimes people have different opinions as us, but this is not a time to debate and disagree - it is a time to practice listening nonjudgmentally.
5. After both students have a chance to play both roles, bring the class back together for a 10-minute guided discussion.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What was the hardest part of being an active listener?
2. What do you think you could have done better as an active listener?
3. Did anyone fall into a pattern of passive hearing?
4. What is something you will make sure you will do in the future as an active listener?

## Supplemental Materials:

*Teachers can also feel free to write their own! These are just suggestions.*

1. “I think cats are better companion animals than dogs.”
2. “I think country music is the best kind of music around.”
3. “Math is the best subject in school and here is why...”
4. “Diet coke is actually really good for you.”
5. “It’s so hard to be vegan because...”
6. “I hate that everyone loves Apple Products - I think Androids are the best because...”
7. “I really hate summer because...”
8. “Cities are the best places to live.”
9. “I really hate going to the beach.”
10. “I don’t enjoy playing or watching sports because...”

## Reinforcement Activities:

1. Teachers should model active listening skills daily in the classroom to reinforce the use of this skill.