

Active listening skills

Active listening has a big impact on the quality of a mentoring relationship and is a core skill for being an effective mentor and mentee.

'Active listening' involves fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker.

To improve your listening skills, practise active listening - making a conscious effort to hear the words and understand the meaning behind them.

Pay careful attention. Try not to become distracted, bored or lose focus. If you're finding it difficult to focus or concentrate, try repeating the words mentally – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.

Try the following technique;

L	Listen to what is being said and how it is being said – tone of voice, speed, volume.
I	Interpret non-verbal messages - body language, facial expressions etc.
S	Show you are being attentive – affirming gestures such as nodding, smiling – and short words or noises 'um', 'yes', 'go on'. Avoid interrupting.
T	Try to understand the meaning, not just hear the words – listen and ask questions.
E	Evaluate and summarise/paraphrase the words of your mentor or mentee back to them to clarify you have understood.
N	Neutralise your feelings – try not to show negative emotions e.g. shock, disapproval, as this may affect your mentee or mentor's willingness to be open with you in the future.

Look at the infographic below for a visual representation and tips on active listening.

Listening Skills

Hear What People Are Really Saying



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Read more at: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html> and <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

More information about active listening is also available via from POD. Visit the page below and scroll down to the 'Learning to really listen' section.

<https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/communication-effectively>