

## Active Listening Scavenger Hunt (Part 1) Practice Activities

Recently, Samantha was hired at a retail store in her hometown. The job consists of working after school three nights per week and every other weekend. Samantha is very excited about this new job, and she wants to demonstrate that she is a good employee. During the interview, the owner of the store said the two most important skills needed for the job are to be able to carefully listen to the customers in order to help meet their needs, and to be able to listen to the manager in order to follow directions and meet expectations. In order to prepare for this new job, Samantha's dad advised her to practice by using a few strategies designed to improve listening skills.

**Now it's your turn to FOCUS and THINK about what the speaker is saying. Try one, or more, of the following strategies to improve your ability as a listener:**

1. Invite one of your parents or friends out for ice cream. While you are at the shop, practice establishing and maintaining eye contact as you are having a conversation. Think about focusing only on the speaker and ignoring distractions. Before talking, turn off your cell phone and other electronic
2. Play the game, "Stop Listening." To play this game you will need two other people. Have one of these people step outside of the room for a few minutes. Next, have the other person that remains think about one of their favorite subjects (movies, sports, vacations, etc.) and prepare to talk about this subject with the other person when he/she comes back into the room. After a few minutes, go outside and tell the person to come back into the room and listen to the speaker for about 30 seconds, but then gradually "stop listening." This means the person will stop giving direct eye contact and focused attention. Maybe the person will keep looking at his/her watch, tie his/her shoes, or flip through a magazine instead of listening. As this happens, watch for the speaker's reaction. Does not paying attention have an impact on the speaker? After this exercise, talk about the experience with the speaker and listener. See what you can learn about the impact that focusing (or not focusing) on the speaker has on both the speaker and the listener.
3. With a family member, listen to a news story or item online without looking at the pictures. Work to hear and understand what the speaker is communicating. After the story is finished, write down what you believe are the main ideas. Check your work by asking your family member to look over your notes to see if you were able to paraphrase the main ideas.
4. When someone gives you directions at home or in school, challenge yourself to ask at least two questions that help to make their message clearer. Practice restating their directions so that you know that you have the right information.

Finally, go to the following websites to learn more about ways to improve your listening skills:

**<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/listeningskills1.html>**

This article describes what it means to really listen to another person. To help, the site gives the 3 basic steps involved in making listening an active process. In addition, 7 tips are given for being a good listener.

**[http://www.ehow.com/info\\_8559160\\_list-activities-listening-skills-children.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_8559160_list-activities-listening-skills-children.html)**

Paula Walters explains 4 different activities parents can use to help build stronger listening skills in their children. These include using stories, games, events from real life, and music. Read this article to find out the specific details.

Good listeners practice **ACTIVE LISTENING**. Active Listening requires the ability to **LISTEN AND SPEAK**. To be a good speaker, you must be a good listener.

### **The Speaker/Listener Communication Cycle**

- Speaker sends a message to the listener  
Listener receives the message and interprets it  
Listener gives feedback to the speaker  
Speaker receives feedback and interprets it.  
(Process is not complete until both individuals have contributed to the conversation)

### **The 4 Key Components of Active Listening** (one-on-one or in groups)

1. **Focus on the speaker**
  - Establish and maintain eye contact
  - Ignore/disregard distractions

## 2. Think about what the speaker is saying

- Work to hear and understand what the speaker is communicating
- Reflect and paraphrase
- Ask clarifying questions

## 3. Respond non-verbally

- Facial expressions
- Body language

## 4. Respond verbally

- Share opinions and feelings
- Explain ideas and thoughts
- Come to an agreement
- Raise issues

Samantha spent the week practicing to improve her skills as a listener. She went out for ice cream with her mom and listened carefully by using eye contact while her mom spoke. This helped her really focus on what her mom was saying. Samantha also took time to listen to an online newscast with her grandfather. It helped to have her grandfather check the notes she took about the story. Her grandfather affirmed that she had heard the main ideas of the story correctly and that her reactions to the story showed she was really thinking about what the reporter said. Samantha now feels ready to listen to customers and her boss at her new after school job.

Now it's your turn to complete two activities on your own:

### 1. Complete a Listening Analysis

Answer each question below by highlighting either YES or NO in order to help you think about your listening skills and needs.

Do I? . . .

Get easily distracted by outside things when listening?

YES      NO

Think of other things while someone is talking?

YES      NO

Find myself interrupting others before they finish speaking?

YES      NO

Reject a topic because I don't think it is interesting?

YES      NO

Judge the speaker on how they look?

YES      NO

Fake paying attention while thinking about something else?

YES      NO

Check my phone while someone is speaking?

YES      NO

Leave a conversation without being able to remember what was said?

YES      NO

Reflect on the questions that you answered with a YES. Think about how you can change that answer to a NO.

(Adapted from: Lucas, S. (2009). *The art of public speaking*. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. New York, NY.)

### 2. Keep a Listening Log

Write down the different ideas and pieces of information that you hear throughout the day, week, or month. Your purpose is to collect as much information as possible. See how your listening improves as you work to collect what you hear. You can also challenge yourself to share at least one of the pieces of information that you hear with someone else.

Finally, go to the following websites to learn more about ways to improve your listening skills:

**[http://www.ehow.com/list\\_5998797\\_list-listening-skills.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_5998797_list-listening-skills.html)**

At this site, you will find an article that lists some great ways to improve your listening skills. The author, Melanie Martin, explains the importance of staying focused, paying attention to the speaker's words, and showing the speaker you have been listening by responding verbally and non-verbally.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/types-of-listening/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/types-of-listening/)**

Play one of the three online games devoted to improving listening skills. In these games you will be challenged to use your listening skills as you play the part of a doctor, nurse, or paramedic who has to follow specific directions in order to help patients. You can also watch a short video that highlights different situations in life where having strong listening skills is important.