
COMMUNICATION

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Active Listening

This activity is part of the **Junior World Changers kit**, created to give teachers of Grades 4, 5 and 6 a fun and practical resource to introduce younger students to social justice issues and to inspire them to stay involved in their local and global communities throughout their lives. To request your copy of the Junior World Changers kit, email youth@freethechildren.com.

Purpose: The purpose of this section is for students to recognize the importance of active listening in their role as a world-changer.

Materials:

- Blank paper
- Writing utensils

Activity

Step 1: The Sounds I hear

Purpose:

- Divide the class into partners and have each student take out a blank piece of paper and writing utensil.
- Ask each partner to sit together somewhere in the room.
- Have the students sit in silence and listen to the noise around them.
- Once students have adjusted to the quiet, ask them to write down all of the sounds they can hear around them: pencils writing on paper, chairs moving, cars driving by, people talking on the street, etc.
- After two minutes has passed, ask students to put down their pencils and compare the sounds they heard with their partner.
- Hold a class discussion around this activity using the following suggested questions:
 - What sounds did you hear?
 - Was your list similar to that of your partners?
 - What did this activity teach you about listening?
 - What do you need to do to ensure you are being a good listener?
 - What was your thought pattern like during this listening activity? (e.g. was your head full of thoughts in the beginning? Were you able to block out your inner thoughts by the end of the activity?)
- Explain to students that this listening activity was about mindfulness. As an active listener it is important to be mindful of what you hear. Your auditory system automatically perceives and differentiates sounds but in order to process these sounds, you need to attend to them as was done in this activity. Explain to students that being aware of this process can give them more conscious control over what they listen to and can help them better process this information.

Step 1: Am I Listening?

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate the importance of active listening and clear instructions through an interactive activity.

- Explain to students that now they are going to put their listening skills to the test!
- Divide the class into pairs.
- Instruct all pairs to sit back to back.
- Provide both partners with a blank piece of paper and writing utensil.
- Explain that one partner is the speaker, while the other partner is the listener. The communicator is allowed to speak and must direct the listener to copy a picture they have drawn, only using words. The listener is not allowed to speak and must follow the speaker's directions.
- Once they have decided their roles, ask the speakers to draw five connected shapes on their blank pieces of paper in silence and keep their picture hidden from their partner.
- After the speakers have completed their drawings, tell them to begin describing their drawing to their partner, providing them with directions on how to complete an identical picture.
- Give students three minutes before specifying that time is up. At this time, ask pairs to compare drawings.
- Write the following questions on the board for students to use as a debrief around the activity:
 - What was difficult about this activity?
 - What were some strategies used by the communicator?
 - What were some strategies used by the listener?
 - How were you able to work together during this activity?
- After students have discussed these questions in their pairs, discuss these questions as a class. Ask students to show the results of their two drawings while they are sharing. Discuss the importance of active listening, patience, and clear and concise directions at this time.
- Before the conclusion of this discussion, ask students how they can improve their communication if they do the activity again. Explain that they will swap roles in their pairs and perform the activity again.
- After three minutes has passed repeat the same debriefing steps as before to determine if there were any improvements.

Step 2: Active Listening

Purpose: The purpose of this step is for students to learn how to be active listeners by being ACTIVE.

- Explain to students that listening skills fuel our social, emotional and professional success. Active listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses attention on the speaker and what the speaker is saying in a way that improves mutual understanding.
- Tell students that in order to be an active listener, you must be ACTIVE.
 - **A**lways make eye contact
 - **C**oncentrate on the speaker
 - **T**urn your body to face them
 - **I**dentify the key points back to the speaker
 - **V**erbally respond
 - **E**ngage with what you learned
- Divide the class into groups of four and ask each group to discuss what each of these steps looks like.
- Ask groups to share their thoughts with the class.
- Following this discussion, have each group practice being ACTIVE. In their groups of four have each group member take a turn being the speaker while the other three members practice being ACTIVE.
- Here are some suggested topics for the speakers to talk about:
 - The importance of education.
 - Their favorite sport.



- A current unit they are studying in school.
 - A recent event they attended.
 - Their ideal vacation.
- To shake up the activity, ask one listener to be a passive listener, doing the opposite of everything outlined in the ACTIVE acronym.
- Following this activity hold a discussion around active listening and why it is an important quality for a world-changer to possess.