



Active Listening

Level 2 Project



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Active Listening

About Active Listening

When we communicate with others, our goal is to understand and be understood. Active listening is a way to reach that goal.

In this project, you will learn the difference between hearing and listening, study how to comprehend and connect with a speaker, and explore why listening helps build strong, lasting connections. You will uncover the relationship between listening and strong leadership.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resources

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

Listening requires concentration and focus to process meaning from words and sentences. When truly listening, you recognize body language, verbal cues, and nonverbal cues that confirm or alter what the speaker is saying

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to demonstrate your ability to listen to what others say.

Overview: At a club meeting, fulfill the role of Topicsmaster. As Topicsmaster, comment on each speaker's Table Topics® speech to demonstrate your active listening skills. For example, you might say, "Thank you. That was a compelling opinion on the benefits of gardening. I understand you feel strongly that everyone needs to spend some time doing something they love."

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.

Learning in Active Listening

Assess and Reflect



To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know the difference between hearing and listening.

Wonder

For example: I wonder what it means to be an active listener.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Apply listening skills to increase comprehension and connection.
- Acknowledge the need for active listening.
- Recognize the difference between hearing and listening.
- Improve basic listening skills.

Hearing Versus Listening

Hearing is the physical act of processing sounds in your environment. It is passive. Listening occurs when you take what you hear and extract meaning. Active listening is the process of understanding and repeating what you have heard.

Focus on these steps to become a better listener:

- Respect the speaker's point of view.
- Relax and remain engaged, giving the speaker your full attention.
- Reserve judgment and notice the speaker's comfort level and excitement.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding.
- Find instances where you empathize with the speaker's experiences.
- Give nonverbal cues to demonstrate your interest.
- Summarize and repeat to demonstrate you understood what the speaker has said.

Nonverbal Cues

Communication

Listening requires you to be aware of more than the words a person speaks. Recognizing the different cues a person gives while communicating is an essential aspect of good listening and can lead to increased understanding. Cues are split into two categories: verbal and nonverbal.

Listening accounts for approximately one-third of the characteristics people use to evaluate communication competence in coworkers.

Verbal cues are found in the volume of the speaker's voice or the tone they use. They can also be heard in the questions a speaker asks, or whether a speaker is seeking approval. Verbal cues may indicate the speaker's state of mind. For example, if they are uncomfortable, their voice might be too loud or too quiet. An uncomfortable speaker may ask questions to seek affirmation or encouragement.

Nonverbal cues are expressed through body language, such as eye contact, crossed arms or legs, and fidgeting.

The Importance of Listening in Leadership

The best leaders tend to be great listeners. Sensing the moods, social dynamics, and attitudes in a room allow a brilliant leader to adjust the tone of their message to fit the audience. Leaders who develop an acute external awareness also tend to be more successful.

Individual performance in an organization is directly connected to the ability to listen effectively. Good listening skills can lead to innovation because considering different perspectives can increase the chance of discovering a more creative answer to any problem.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How does improving your listening skills help you build better connections?
- What is the value of active listening?
- Describe the difference between hearing and listening.
- What steps can you take to improve your basic listening skills?

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- Serving as Topicsmaster at a club meeting

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Request to be the Topicsmaster at a club meeting.

Explain to the Vice President Education that you will be completing your Active Listening project and will need extra time and an evaluator to evaluate your active listening skills.

Complete the role of Topicsmaster as described in the Active Listening project.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Active Listening

- 5 – Responds with interest and fully supportive comments after each Table Topics® speech
- 4 – Responds with clear interest after each Table Topics® speech
- 3 – Responds to specific content after each Table Topics® speech
- 2 – Responds to specific content after some Table Topics® speeches
- 1 – Responds to content after few or no Table Topics® speeches

Engagement

- 5 – Highly interested and engaged with every speaker
- 4 – Shows interest and is fully engaged when all others are speaking
- 3 – Shows interest when others are speaking
- 2 – Shows some interest in speakers
- 1 – Shows little or no interest in speakers

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned how to ask questions to clarify what I am hearing.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Active Listening project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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