

Active Listening

Active listening involves paying attention, withholding judgment, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing and sharing. And each listening skill requires several techniques or behaviours. The Center for Creative Leadership's Michael Hoppe says there are six core skills that contribute to an active listening repertoire:

- 1: Pay attention.** One goal of active listening is to set a comfortable tone and allow time and opportunity for the other person to think and speak. Pay attention to your frame of mind as well as your body language. Be focused on the moment and operate from a place of respect.
- 2: Withhold judgment.** Active listening requires an open mind. As a listener and a leader, you need to be open to new ideas, new perspectives and new possibilities. Even when good listeners have strong views, they suspend judgment, hold their criticism and avoid arguing or selling their point right away.
- 3: Reflect.** Learn to mirror the other person's information and emotions by paraphrasing key points. Don't assume that you understand correctly or that the other person knows you've heard them. Reflecting is a way to indicate that you and your counterpart are on the same page.
- 4: Clarify.** Don't be shy to ask questions about any issue that is ambiguous or unclear. Powerful, open-ended, clarifying and probing questions are important tools. They draw people out and encourage them to expand their ideas, while inviting reflection and thoughtful response.
- 5: Summarize.** Restating key themes as the conversation proceeds confirms and solidifies your grasp of the other person's point of view. It also helps both parties to be clear on mutual responsibilities and follow-up. Briefly summarize what you have understood, and ask the other person to do the same.
- 6: Share.** Active listening is first about understanding the other person, then about being understood. As you gain a clearer understanding of the other person's perspective, you can then introduce your ideas, feelings and suggestions. You might talk about a similar experience you had or share an idea that was triggered by a comment made previously in the conversation.

Adapted from <https://www.ccl.org/multimedia/podcast/the-big-6-an-active-listening-skill-set/>