

# Active Listening Skills

**Unit:** Soft Skills

**Problem Area:** Communication

**Lesson:** Active Listening Skills

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Use standard vocabulary terms to define active listening skills.**
- 2 Practice active listening by paraphrasing and repeating and by observing body language.**

- **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

“Active Listening,” *Wikipedia*. Accessed May 28, 2010.

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Active\\_listening&oldid=361399076](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Active_listening&oldid=361399076)>.

“Are You a Good Listener?” (test), *Queendom: The Land of Tests*. Accessed

May 22, 2010. <[http://www.queendom.com/tests/access\\_page/index.htm?idRegTest=703](http://www.queendom.com/tests/access_page/index.htm?idRegTest=703)>.

Bickham, Imelda. “Degrees of Active Listening” (chart), *Wikipedia*, September 1, 2009. Accessed May 28, 2010. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Active-listening-chart.png>>.

“Effective Communication,” *Group Works*, Bulletin #6103. Excerpted and

adapted from Flaxen D. L. Conway, “Effective Communication,” Working Together Series, Oregon State University Service Bulletin EC 1510, 1994. Accessed May 23, 2010. <<http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/PDFpubs/6103.pdf>>.



- “IELTS Listening Test,” *Exam English*. Accessed May 26, 2010.  
<[http://www.examenglish.com/IELTS/cbIELTS\\_listening.htm](http://www.examenglish.com/IELTS/cbIELTS_listening.htm)>.
- Kenyon, Laura. “How to Actively Listen,” *eHow*. Accessed May 24, 2010.  
<[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5171480\\_actively-listen.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5171480_actively-listen.html)>.
- “25 Examples of Body Language,” *Listverse*. Accessed May 30, 2010.  
<<http://listverse.com/2007/11/08/25-examples-of-body-language/>>.
- Valder, Roshan. “Active Listening Activities,” *Buzzle.com*. Accessed May 25, 2010. <<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/active-listening-activities.html>>.
- “What Is Active Telephone Listening?” *eHow*. Accessed May 24, 2010.  
<[http://www.ehow.com/video\\_4989465\\_active-telephone-listening.html](http://www.ehow.com/video_4989465_active-telephone-listening.html)>.

## ■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and internet access
- ✓ Classroom resources and reference materials

## ■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ active listening
- ▶ attend
- ▶ body language
- ▶ distraction
- ▶ effective communication
- ▶ interact
- ▶ paraphrase
- ▶ question
- ▶ repeat

## ■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

*Begin by talking with students about why people need effective communication skills in a manufacturing environment. Ask them questions and field responses about the topic. Explain that active listening is the process of listening in an engaged and deliberate manner and is an integral part of effective communication. In a manufacturing environment, active listening may take place, for example, during a meeting when the speaker is describing a new*

product or when a supervisor is listening to workers describe problems they are having on the job. Working together as a team requires effective communication. Tell students that they may be practicing active listening at this moment if they are engaged and deliberately listening. Encourage additional comments from students, and alert them that they will be developing and applying active listening skills in this lesson.

If students have difficulty imagining a manufacturing setting in which effective communication takes place, browse a Web site—for example, [YouTube](#)—using keyword searches, such as “office communication” and “active listening,” to find related videos to assist in introducing the lesson.

To demonstrate active listening skills, use a small soft toy suitable for tossing to play a listening game. Each student is to think of a color, an animal, or another object. Then, the student should say the name chosen for the toy as he or she tosses the toy to another student. As students play, each repeats the name of the toy chosen by the person from whom the toy was received. As play continues, each student may be asked to add the name of the person to whom he or she tosses the toy. To succeed at this game, students must focus on listening carefully, remembering what they hear, and repeating the messages accurately.

Display VM–A. Tell students that they will be learning how to develop and apply active listening skills.

## CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Use standard vocabulary terms to define active listening skills.

**Anticipated Problem:** What terms describe active listening skills?

I. Defining active listening skills

A. **Effective communication** is a two-way process in which the receiver gets the sender’s message and, through actions or words, provides feedback. Effective communication is important to being productive in any work environment. For example:

1. A supervisor clearly explains work expectations to an employee, and that employee concentrates and listens carefully enough to the message that it is quickly learned and remembered.

2. A worker explains a situation to a supervisor, and the supervisor listens carefully and asks good questions to completely understand the employee's message.
- B. **Active listening** is the process of listening in an engaged and deliberate manner and is an integral part of effective communication. It is a behavior that helps people listen for meaning. Active listening requires the listener to understand, interpret, and evaluate what is heard while receiving the message and after receiving it. To practice active listening, one needs to:
1. **Interact** with the speaker (connect with the speaker by paying attention, listening carefully, and providing feedback).
  2. Pay attention to body language. **Body language** is the facial expressions and physical movements of the sender. Body language communicates many non-verbal messages that are very important to effective communication. By paying attention to a speaker's body language, the listener can get a more complete understanding of the message.
  3. Attend to the speaker. To **attend** is to confirm what the speaker is saying by the use of positive body language and short utterances. While actively listening, a person may nod the head or say things such as "Uh-uh" or "I understand." By attending to the speaker, the listener stays engaged and lets the speaker know the message is being received.
  4. Ask questions of the speaker. While a person actively listens, he or she should question the speaker. To **question** is to communicate new thoughts for which the listener desires a response while listening. This helps the listener understand, and it helps the speaker know if the message is too complex or confusing to the listener.
  5. Concentrate on the message while ignoring distractions. A **distraction** is an unimportant or unrelated message. By ignoring distractions, the active listener is able to focus more deeply on the speaker's message and better able to receive the message.
- C. To **repeat** is to speak or write the message exactly the way the speaker communicates it. The use of repetition is an important skill in active listening. Repeating the message helps the listener learn the message by processing it and internalizing it in his or her thoughts. It also helps the speaker to know that the message was sent completely and correctly.
- D. To **paraphrase** is to restate the speaker's message using different words. Paraphrasing is a skill in active listening that causes the receiver to process the message by finding a new way to think about it and relate it to what the receiver already knows about the message. It can also be used to confirm to the speaker that the message was received.

**Teaching Strategy:** Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Repeat the use of VM–A as a visual reminder of workplace listening skills. Assign LS–A to be completed during your lecture on active listening skills. Facilitate a discussion of the active listening vocabulary terms students recorded.

**Objective 2:** Practice active listening by paraphrasing and repeating and by observing body language.

**Anticipated Problem:** What does active listening sound and look like?

II. Practicing active listening skills

A. Active listening

1. Listening skills are developed through practice. By actively listening, the receiver of the message learns to attend to the sender by watching the speaker's body language and confirming what the speaker is saying through the listener's own body language and short utterances.
2. Ignoring distractions is a behavior that must be practiced. Our world is filled with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic messages intended to grab our attention. A confident and practiced listener can tune out the distractions.
3. After listening to the sender's message, the receiver can repeat the message directly and then paraphrase it.

B. Body language at work

1. Using positive, approachable body language is important to a healthy work environment. A meeting between a supervisor and employees, as well as a meeting in a team or large-group setting, often requires one to interpret the speaker's body language to reveal and comprehend the entire message. The ability to read the body language of workplace colleagues improves team building and task completion.
2. Examples of observable body language at work:
  - a. Arms crossed over chest—Defensive posture, negative message
  - b. Mirrored body posture (two persons standing straight, looking at each other)—Two people who are in agreement about the topic
  - c. Non-mirrored body posture (one person standing straight and looking at the other, the other looking down and slightly hunched)—Two people who are not in agreement about the topic
  - d. Direct eye contact—Interested
  - e. Downcast eyes or no eye contact—Not interested, guilty
  - f. Hand gestures—Quick, nonverbal signals offered in both noisy and quiet workplaces, in social situations, or at home to communicate with another

**Teaching Strategy:** Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-B to introduce common hand gestures used in the workplace. Ask students to view and respond to the meaning of each hand gesture. For further information about body language, access <http://listverse.com/2007/11/08/25-examples-of-body-language/>. This site lists the top 25 body language messages used in work, social, and home situations. Using a large-group presentation or having students access the site before engaging in lab activities may be helpful. Assign LS-B and LS-C to have partners experience active listening through two short messages, along with the

*subsequent repeating and paraphrasing of the messages and observation of body language. After the two activities, ask the partners to exchange their respective lab sheet notes with each other to check how well each was able to repeat and paraphrase the message and observe the body language of the speaker.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions found in textbooks may also be used in the Review/Summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson. Have students identify additional speaking techniques used in the manufacturing industry.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Matching**

1. h
2. i
3. c
4. d
5. a
6. e
7. g
8. f
9. b

### **Part Two: Completion**

1. work environment
2. evaluate
3. nonverbal
4. attend
5. repeat
6. distractions
7. meaning
8. interpret

### Part Three: True/False

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. F
7. F
8. T
9. T

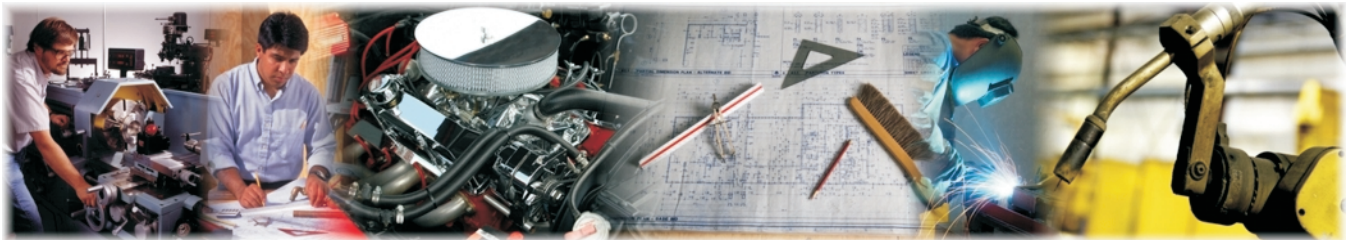
# Active Listening Skills

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| a. effective communication | f. body language |
| b. active listening        | g. question      |
| c. interact                | h. repeat        |
| d. attend                  | i. paraphrase    |
| e. distraction             |                  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. To speak or write the message exactly the way the speaker communicates it
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. To restate the speaker's message using different words
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. To connect with the speaker by paying attention, listening carefully, and providing feedback
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. To confirm what the speaker is saying by the use of positive body language and short utterances
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A two-way process in which the receiver gets the sender's message and, through actions or words, provides feedback
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. An unimportant or unrelated message
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To communicate new thoughts for which the listener desires a response while listening
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Facial expressions and physical movements of the sender
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The process of listening in an engaged and deliberate manner





## ► Part Two: Completion

**Instructions:** Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

1. Effective communication is important to being productive in any \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Active listening requires the listener to understand, interpret, and \_\_\_\_\_ what is heard while receiving the message and after receiving it.
3. Body language communicates many \_\_\_\_\_ messages that are very important to effective communication.
4. The active listener can \_\_\_\_\_ to what the speaker is saying by the use of body language and short utterances.
5. When the active listener speaks or writes the message exactly the way the speaker communicates it, the listener is said to \_\_\_\_\_ the message.
6. The active listener must concentrate on the message while ignoring \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Active listening helps us listen for \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Monitoring eye contact is one way the receiver can better \_\_\_\_\_ the sender's message.

## ► Part Three: True/False

**Instructions:** Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. A colleague with his or her arms crossed over the chest is indicating a defensive posture and/or a negative message.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Using positive, approachable body language is important to a healthy work environment.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. The ability to read the body language of workplace colleagues improves team building and task completion.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Mirrored body posture indicates the two people are in agreement with each other about the topic.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. A “thumbs up” hand gesture indicates a negative response.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. A closed fist is the hand gesture for “Call me.”
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Direct eye contact between two people indicates that one of the people is feeling guilty.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Hand gestures are quick, nonverbal signals offered in both noisy and quiet workplaces, in social situations, or at home to communicate with another.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. When a person holds the thumb and forefinger a few inches apart, it means “You’re so close.”

# VISUAL SIGNS OF ACTIVE LISTENING

## Effective Communication Requires Active Listening



# BODY LANGUAGE—WHAT DO THESE HAND GESTURES MEAN?



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_



5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_

# **BODY LANGUAGE—WHAT DO THESE HAND GESTURES MEAN?**

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1. Peace sign, victory sign.
2. “OK.” “Good.” “Perfect.”
3. “Stop!”
4. “You’re so close.” “This much more.”
5. “Call me.”
6. “Hello.” Other friendly greeting.
7. Hands counting: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

# Standard Active Listening Vocabulary—Terms to Know

## Purpose

To become familiar with the standard vocabulary of active listening.

## Objective

Use standard vocabulary terms to define active listening skills.

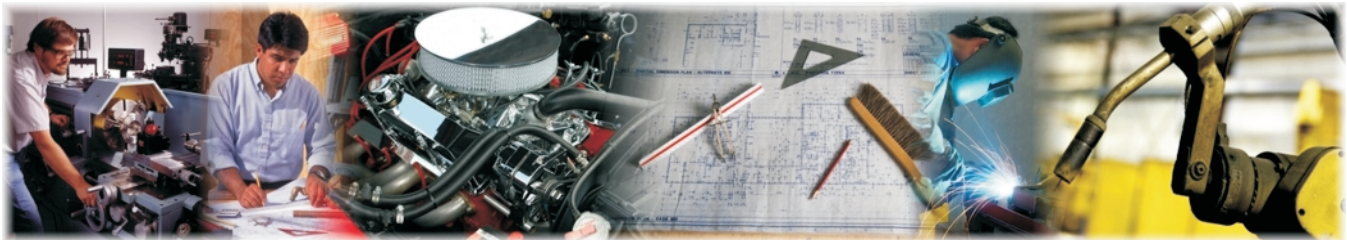
## Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Watch or listen to your teacher’s presentation about the terms used in this lesson.
2. Record the definitions to the terms below.

Term	Definition
Active listening	
Attend	



Term	Definition
Body language	
Distraction	
Effective communication	
Interact	
Paraphrase	
Question	
Repeat	

3. Review and compare the definitions you recorded by participating in a discussion of the terms. Revise definitions as necessary.
4. Turn in your completed lab sheet to your instructor.

# Standard Active Listening Vocabulary—Terms to Know

Term	Description
Active listening	The process of listening in an engaged and deliberate manner; an integral part of effective communication
Attend	To confirm what the speaker is saying by the use of positive body language and short utterances
Body language	Facial expressions and physical movements of the sender
Distraction	An unimportant or unrelated message
Effective communication	A two-way process in which the receiver gets the sender's message and, through actions or words, provides feedback
Interact	To connect with the speaker by paying attention, listening carefully, and providing feedback
Paraphrase	To restate the speaker's message using different words
Question	To communicate new thoughts for which the listener desires a response while listening
Repeat	To speak or write the message exactly the way the speaker communicates it

# What Does Active Listening Sound Like?—Part 1

## Purpose

To practice active listening skills by participating in a short, spoken-message activity.

## Objectives

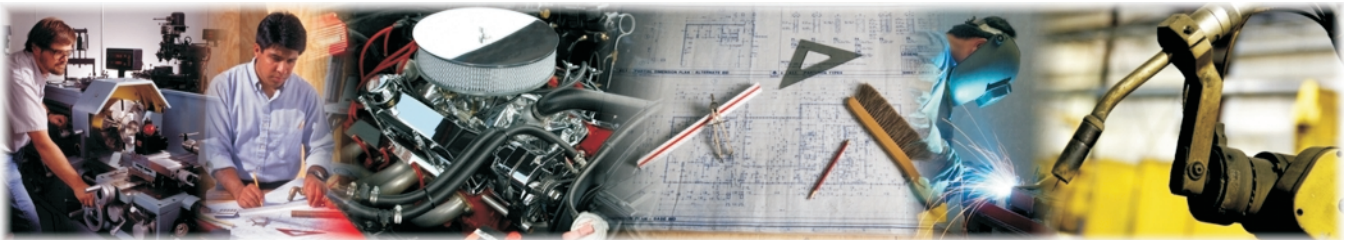
1. Practice active listening by repeating.
2. Practice active listening by paraphrasing.
3. Practice active listening by observing body language.
4. Participate in a class discussion of your active listening observations.

## Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Divide into pairs. You and your partner will be pretending to be a customer and a representative of a cell phone company. One person will be the customer (reader), and the other the company representative (active listener). Decide who will play each role. The event takes place face to face between the customer and the company representative.
2. The customer reads out loud the “Active Listening Monologue #1—The Customer” while the representative listens, asks questions, and watches body language.
3. The representative then repeats the message back to the customer.





4. The customer responds to the representative.
5. Then, in the spaces provided, the representative writes a paraphrase of the message, a description of the customer’s body language, and the ways in which the representative attended to the customer.
  - a. Paraphrase the customer’s message.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Describe the customer’s body language.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Describe how the representative attended to the customer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Review your paraphrase, body language, and attend notes with your partner when the instructor initiates discussion.

### **Active Listening Monologue #1—The Customer**

“Hi. My name is Ben Workingdude, and I am a customer of your cell phone manufacturing company. I need to tell you about a problem we are having with the 100 cell phones you sold to our company last month. We are very happy with the cell phone design—we like the screen and the buttons and the way the phones look. Our employees have commented that they really like the touch screen design and the brightness of the screen, especially when they use their phones in dark rooms or outside at night. But we are having problems with the cell phone chargers. About 30 of the chargers don’t work in certain situations, such as when our employees try to charge their phones in their cars. And some of the chargers don’t work at the employees’ homes when they try to charge their phones there. Some of the chargers don’t work at all, and some of them work only part of the time. I’m wondering if you can explain this to me and tell me what I need to do to get the problem fixed.”

# What Does Active Listening Sound Like?—Part 2

## Purpose

To practice active listening skills by participating in a short, spoken-message activity.

## Objectives

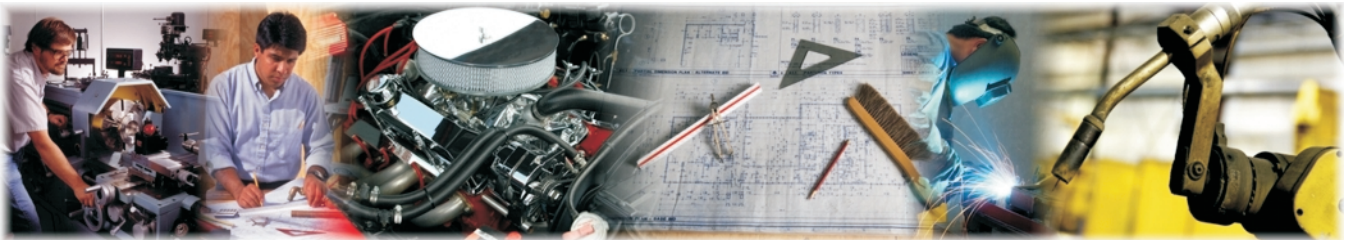
1. Practice active listening by repeating.
2. Practice active listening by paraphrasing.
3. Practice active listening by observing body language.
4. Participate in a class discussion of your active listening observations.

## Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Remain with your partner, and reverse roles for Part 2 of the active listening activity so that the company representative is now the reader and the customer is now the active listener. Again, the event takes place face to face between the company representative and the customer.
2. The representative reads out loud the “Active Listening Monologue #2—The Company Representative” while the customer listens, asks questions, and watches body language.
3. The customer then repeats the message back to the representative.
4. The representative responds to the customer.



5. Then, in the spaces provided, the customer writes a paraphrase of the message, a description of the representative's body language, and the ways in which the customer attended to the representative.
  - a. Paraphrase the representative's message.
  
  - b. Describe the representative's body language.
  
  - c. Describe how the customer attended to the representative.
  
6. Review your paraphrase, body language, and attend notes with your partner when the instructor initiates the discussion.
  
7. What elements of this conversation would have been changed if it had taken place over the phone rather than in person? Be specific. What would have been easier? What would have been more difficult?

### Active Listening Monologue #2: The Company Representative

"Hi. My name is Estralita Servitae, and I'd like to help you with the problems you've been having with our product. I will need you to provide some information to get started with the diagnosis. First, I will need to know the exact model numbers of the cell phones you purchased from us. The model numbers can be found on the inside of the cell phones behind the battery. You will need to open each cell phone and remove the battery to see the nameplate sticker. You may have purchased several different models, so be sure to check all the cell phones you are having problems with. When you have those numbers, please email me, and I will take it from there. My email address is [eservitae@redberry.com](mailto:eservitae@redberry.com).