

# Active listening – 50 activities – 10 from each partner

*Activities may be overlapping or have similarities as each partner created them separately in the workgroup formed inside their organisation.*

## **PARTNER 1**

### **1. Role-play: listening without interrupting**

Partners work together where one person speaks, and the other listens. The listener focuses fully, without making comments or interrupting. After the conversation, they discuss how it felt to be truly heard. This exercise teaches empathy and attention.

### **2. Listening chain**

The group sits in a circle. One person starts by talking about their day or a thought. The next person repeats what they heard in their own words and adds their thoughts. The chain continues until everyone has spoken and listened. This develops the ability to follow and understand others.

### **3. Description and drawing**

Partners work together. One person describes a picture that the other cannot see, and the other tries to draw it based on the description. This enhances active listening skills and accuracy.

### **4. Mirror listening**

Partners share short stories or thoughts, which the other person reflects back word-for-word. This exercise helps reinforce understanding and focus on what is heard.

### **5. Mindfulness listening**

Participants sit quietly and focus on surrounding sounds for 5 minutes, trying to identify and describe them in sequence. Afterward, they share their experiences. The exercise develops concentration and awareness of the surrounding environment.

### **6. Active listening feedback**

Partners share feedback on each other's listening skills, noting what worked and areas for improvement. This promotes self-awareness in communication.'

### **7. Story-based listening**

One participant shares a short personal story, and the listener asks thoughtful follow-up questions. This teaches listening for meaning.

### **8. Listening meditation**

In pairs, participants alternate speaking for 2 minutes each, followed by silence and reflection on how the exchange felt. This builds mindful communication.

### **9. Music listening reflection**

Participants listen to a piece of music, focusing on specific instruments or rhythms. They then discuss what they heard. This hones detailed auditory focus.

### **10. Listening journal**

Participants keep a week-long journal where they note situations where they actively listened, reflecting on the experience.

## **PARTNER 2**

### **1. Paraphrasing Practice**

Listen to a speaker and then paraphrase what they said to ensure understanding.

### **2. The Listening Circle**

In a group, each person speaks in turn while others listen without interrupting, then summarize what was said.

### **3. Summarization Exercises**

Listen to a passage or conversation and then summarize the main points.

### **4. Storytelling Relay**

One person starts a story, and each subsequent person adds to it, ensuring they listen carefully to continue the narrative.

### **5. Question and Answer**

After listening to a short talk or presentation, ask open-ended questions to delve deeper into the topic.

### **6. Nonverbal Cues**

Practice recognizing and interpreting nonverbal signals like body language and facial expressions.

### **7. Reflective Listening**

Reflect on the speaker's message by summarizing their points and expressing empathy.

### **8. Active Listening Pairs**

Pair up and take turns speaking and listening, focusing on maintaining eye contact and providing feedback.

### **9. Listening Without Interrupting**

Practice listening to someone speak for a set amount of time without interrupting, then discuss what was heard.

### **10. Feedback Sessions**

Students participate in sessions where they give and receive feedback on listening skills, focusing on areas for improvement.

## **PARTNER 3**

### **1. Listen to music!**

Pupils benefit from listening to music. They confess that choosing the right music is important. Rock music makes them more dynamic/better/energetic, instrumental music relaxes them, makes them calm/sad; music without lyrics increases their creativity, latino music helps with concentration, rap music is distracting them because of the lyrics.

### **2. Chinese whispers**

Group activity: Each group gets a sentence with equal number of words. Each word is whispered by the teacher to first child, who whispers it to the last, who writes it on board - fastest group with the most identified words, wins.

### **3. Physical exercises**

Physical exercises help stimulate students' brain and keep it refreshed. Physical activities (Arm circles/ Chest stretch/ Knee-to-chest/ Leg extensions/ Neck rolls/ Air jump rope/ Desk pushups/ Toe touches/ Water bottle) help to improve memory capacity and overall concentration. Students stay energized, exercises give them extra boost they need to stay focused and listen with concentration in lessons.

### **4. Paraphrasing**

Pupils are engaged in active listening by summarizing the main points of the speaker's message to show they fully understood the meaning. This exercise allows the speakers to clarify vague information and to expand their message. Example: "So what you're saying is, that no longer enjoy spending time in your family cabin because you have no friends there and you feel lonely."

### **5. Ask open-ended questions**

Asking open-ended and clarifying questions is an active listening tool that shows students gathered the essence of what they've shared and guides them into sharing more information. They make sure these questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Examples of open-ended questions: "Where did you go?", "How did you feel?" etc.

### **6. Guess song lyrics**

Teacher plays the song in class several times while students fill in the blanks with what they hear. They write the missing words, then check in pairs/ with the whole class for correct answers. They may sing the song together afterwards.

### **7. Summarize a TED Talk you watch**

Pupils watch (YouTube, Spotify, Podcasts) a short story, a podcast, or a TED Talk several times. They may take notes while listening as it helps them summarize the information they heard. Each student shares what they heard with the class.

### **8. Share similar experiences**

Pupils discuss comparable situations, i.e. communicating with their parents, siblings, etc. It shows the speaker you've successfully interpreted their message; it assists in building relationships. Sharing a problem provides input on how people can overcome similar challenges and it is valuable.

### **9. The Hidden Phrase**

Pupils form pairs, the teacher gives an individual "secret phrase" to each pair, for example: "Yesterday I saw an alien in my garden"; "I would like to travel to a deserted island". The pair is asked to create a story around this phrase and present it to the class. The other pupils have to guess the hidden phrase that the teacher gave at the beginning.

### **10. Compare and contrast 2 ads**

The teacher finds two ads for similar products/ asks the pupils compare them, find differences & similarities between the 2 ads, present them to the class while others make notes and report back what they heard.

## **PARTNER 4**

### **1. Listening to the Sounds of Life.**

The teacher invites the children and young people to sit comfortably (preferably outdoors). Then, ask them to focus their attention on the sounds around them. Encourage them to identify these sounds, whether they are near or far, loud or soft, constant, or fleeting. Have them notice all the sounds for a few minutes. Next, invite them to listen to the sound of their own breathing for a few moments. Finally, ask them to observe how they are feeling at that moment, allowing themselves to stay with those sensations... in silence. By training their attention to notice the sounds around them, children and young people develop the ability to focus and self-regulate their attention, an important skill for promoting active listening.

### **2. The World is in Our Hands**

In this exercise, we will pass a ball around to all the participants. Whoever catches the ball should share something that is bothering them. Then, they gently throw the ball to the next person, saying, "I am grateful for..."; Example: "Today I feel upset because I forgot my phone at home..." Pass the ball to a child or young person while saying: "I am grateful for the opportunity to be with you all today." Next, the ball should be passed around to all the children and young people until it returns to the facilitator. At the end, the teacher invites the children and young people to share their experience in pairs (or as a group if you consider it appropriate). Learning to recognize personal challenges and practicing gratitude from an early age is crucial for the healthy emotional development of children and young people. Active listening to others' emotions and expressing their own, helps pupils connect to their peers, feel supported, handle difficulties positively, foster a sense of well-being and emotional balance.

### **3. Wishes for the World**

The teacher invites the children and young people to sit comfortably and imagine a huge floating ball above them. Then, ask them, one by one, to share their wishes for the world. Encourage them to express their wishes and imagine placing them inside the ball. Explain that each wish makes the ball

grow larger and heavier. Together, count to three and then "throw" the ball towards the sky, saying goodbye as they imagine it carrying their wishes to all the people around the world. When children and young people listen to their peers share their wishes for the world, they practice mindfulness, active listening, and respect for others' perspectives. This experience promotes empathy, as listening with presence and interest without interruptions creates an emotional connection with others' aspirations. Additionally, this practice stimulates feelings of well-being and compassion, fostering an environment of mutual support and understanding. By valuing others' wishes, they also develop the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes, strengthening their sense of community and respect for differences.

#### **4. Emphatic Walk**

The teacher invites the participants to remain open-minded and attentive during the activity, practicing active listening with empathy and understanding for the other person's words. Then, introduce a topic or questions for the participants to discuss or answer during the activity. Divide the participants into pairs, preferably with people they do not know well. Each pair begins walking together along a pre-established route. During the walk, one person takes on the role of the "narrator" and shares a significant personal experience related to the topic, a challenge they faced, or a meaningful emotional situation, or responds to the pre-established questions. The other person, the "listener," should listen actively, in silence, and with understanding, without judging or giving advice. Then, they switch roles. After switching roles and reflecting together as pairs, the group reconvenes to share their experiences and insights about the activity.

#### **5. Follow the Music**

The teacher invites the pupils to choose a song they enjoy listening to. Ask them to focus on a particular component of the music, such as the lyrics, the beat, or the melody. Encourage them to pay special attention to this component throughout the song. If they get distracted, it's okay; they just need to bring their attention back to what they chose. At the end, ask the children and young people to share the component they focused on, what they noticed, what they discovered about the music, and the song's theme. Listening attentively to music trains the mind to do the same when conversing with a friend or family member, ensuring they are truly understood. When we listen with great attention, we can respond more wisely and kindly.

#### **6. The Interview**

The teacher invites the pupils to pair up. Next, explain that one person will take on the role of the interviewer and the other will be the interviewee. The interviewer should ask questions to get to know their partner better and discover new things about them. They should write down the questions and answers on a piece of paper. Afterward, they switch roles. At the end, each person should share with the group what they learned new about their partner. The objective of this exercise is to discover new things about your peers by asking questions and actively and attentively listening to their responses.

#### **7. Creative Conversation Game**

The teacher invites the pupils to write down various topics and questions on cards, such as: "I really like...", "I don't like at all...", "Today I feel...", "Tell a funny story...". After creating several cards, each participant should take turns picking a card and responding. The other participants should listen

attentively to their peer's sharing. When pupils make an effort to get to know and listen to others actively, they also understand them better and learn to appreciate them.

### **8. Emotional Mirroring**

The teacher divides the group into pairs. One participant shares a personal experience that had a significant emotional impact. The listener should pay attention not only to the words but also to the tone of voice, body language, and emotions conveyed. After the sharing, the listener reflects on what they heard and observed, trying to express what they believe the speaker was feeling, using phrases such as "It seems like you felt..." or "I noticed you felt... when...". The speaker confirms or corrects the interpretation, deepening mutual understanding. Then, the roles are switched. The goal is to develop the ability to listen not only to the words but also to the underlying emotions, promoting a more empathetic and emotionally connected form of active listening.

### **9. Conflict Role-Playing**

The teacher divides the group into pairs or small groups and provides each pair with a conflict scenario to work on, such as a misunderstanding between coworkers or a family argument. Each person in the group should take on a role and act out the situation, attempting to resolve the conflict while practicing active listening. After the role play, each person shares with the group how active listening influenced the resolution of the conflict. The teacher and the entire group can provide feedback and discuss how active listening can be applied in real-life conflict situations. This exercise focuses on practicing active listening in conflict situations, helping participants improve communication and problem-solving skills. The goal is to enhance active listening abilities in challenging situations, promoting mutual understanding and effective conflict resolution.

### **10. Listening to Emotions**

The teacher asks the participants to form a circle. Give each participant a card with an emotion written on it (such as joy, sadness, fear, anxiety, etc.). Each person should share a brief story or personal situation, expressing the emotion on their card. The listeners should pay attention not only to the content of the story but also to the emotion being conveyed. After each story, the group discusses how the emotion was expressed and perceived, and how this influenced listening and understanding. The goal is to develop the ability to perceive and interpret emotions during communication, enhancing active listening and empathy.

## **PARTNER 5**

### **1. Active listening rules**

Students are divided into two groups and sit in two concentric circles: the pairs sit facing each other. On a signal, those in the outer circle start a speech on one of the following topics. Those in the inner circle only listen, they do not speak. Then, using the same topic, those in the inner circle speak and those in the outer circle only listen. Listeners should not interrupt, should not say ("and why did you ..."), should not give advice and support ("you could have ..." or "you should have ...") and should not mention their experience ("well I would have done ..."). The topic of discussion should be personal: students can talk about a pleasant or unpleasant experience, a friendship or a commitment that was successfully completed, etc. They talk in the form of 'my own statements', saying how they felt when

such and such happened ... (2 topics maximum). Examples of discussion topics (posted in advance).

- The most humorous event that has ever happened to me.
- Incident in which I was angrier than I have ever been.
- Imagine you are an all-powerful king/queen.
- What would you do for your classmates or the people of your town?
- What would be my favorite birthday?

Then everyone should repeat what they heard from their partner. They should repeat the words of their partner.

## 2. Listen carefully

We divide the group into pairs and each member describes five things they like and then each member announces to the whole group what they heard from their partner. This is a simple activity that can be done with younger pupils starting from age 7-8.

## 3. Bad "listeners"

Students sit on the floor in a circle, and one volunteer leaves the room while the others agree on how to behave as bad "listeners". Each chooses to clearly demonstrate a lack of interest and lack of attention to the 'speaker'. Looking in the other direction, scratching, cleaning their nails, looking at their watch, coughing, etc. After returning to the room, the speaker should sit in the middle of the circle, choose the most interesting movie they have seen recently or tell something pleasant from their life (birthday, field trip, etc.) and begin speaking. We interrupt the role-playing after a short time and all listeners applaud the speaker(s).

Questions for the listeners:

How do you think the person speaking felt while you were not listening?

If you were the speaker, how would you have reacted?

Questions for the speaker:

How did you feel?

What did you feel like you were doing when no one was listening?

How would you describe when no one was listening?

## 4. Balls – messages

The plenary is divided into three groups of 6-8 members. The teacher gives each group a ball and invites them to start throwing it to each other to create a steady flow of throws. Each member always throws the ball to the same teammate while saying his or her name. Once the flow is established, the teacher gives each team a second ball and once the throwing flow is stabilized, a third, maybe even a fourth. Usually, as the number of balls increases, the rate of pitching accelerates instead of slowing down. The teacher can stop the game and discuss the problems that occurred, also clarify the symbolism of throwing the ball (messages in our daily life). Some questions, such as: Why were many ball throws missed? When we send messages back and forth, do others have time to catch them? What solutions might there be for better communication? (e.g., alert the receiver, slow down, wait for them to notice us, etc.).

## 5. Listen to the story

The group is divided into two groups, the pupils in the first group listen to a story. Then the pupils in the second group ask open-ended questions to find out as much as possible.

## **6. Play the role**

Role-playing in simulated conversations: the students practice applying active listening techniques in a safe and controlled environment. At the role-play scenarios in school conflict two students act as if they had a conflict, voicing a complaint, while the other two act as the mediators, members from the mediation school team, using active listening to understand the issue and find a resolution. The mediators are not allowed to express personal opinions, judgements or comments.

## **7. Practice to listening**

A student recounts an unpleasant incident. The students follow the instructions below: Stand up and sit as close as possible to the speaker. Listen with your eyes, ears and heart. With your eyes, ears, eyes, ears, ears, eyes, ears, ears and ears. Nod your head affirmatively to show that you are listening. Follow the speaker with your gaze.

## **8. Broken phone otherwise**

Children divided into groups of 6-8 pupils sitting behind each other facing all facing the same direction. The last pupil in each group "writes" a letter, number or shape on the back of the child in front of them and they try to understand it and pass it on to the next child until the message reaches the first child and they write it on a piece of paper. We discuss how messages are transferred, why they change along the way, what affects them.

## **9. Non-verbal signals**

The teacher divides the group into pairs and asks one member to describe a mime story from their life, such as describing their last birthday event. The first member listens without saying anything but gives non-verbal cues. He then asks the person if his nonverbal cues are encouraging or not.

## **10. Practice techniques**

The teacher explains to the pupils active listening using specific expressions and the following techniques:

Examples:

Build trust: "Tell me what I can do to help"

Create a relationship: "I was really impressed when I read..."

Show interest: "I'd like to help you; I know you're going through a difficult time."

Paraphrase "I mean, what you're saying is that..."

Give short verbal reassurances "Thank you for your time. I really enjoy talking to you."

Ask open-ended questions "What part of the presentation did you find difficult to understand?"

Ask specific questions "How much time did you take to..."

Do not interrupt when expressing your opinion "Can you please give more..."

Disclose similar situations "I was very upset with..."

Use non-verbal cues Nods, eye contact, forward leaning