

Respect

This week's focus is on respectful communication through active listening. Students will learn what active listening is and how to engage in it during the primary lesson. The mini-lessons throughout the week will reinforce the importance of actively listening and give students an opportunity to practice their active listening skills.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

Main Lesson

Whole Class Lesson

30 minutes



Active Listening

In this lesson, students watch a brief video that explains what active listening is and how to engage in it. Students will then get an opportunity to discuss what they learned and practice active listening and respectful communication by discussing a debatable issue with a partner. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

Mini Lessons

For Small Groups

15 minutes



Observing Active Listening Skills

This activity will let students identify either active listening or disrespectful listening. Choose 4-5 pairs of volunteers (depending on time): 4-5 talkers and 4-5 listeners. Write the listening skills on the board and, secretly, assign each pair to either portray active listening in their conversation or to do the opposite of active listening (example: instead of looking at the talker, the listener looks off in the distance or down, as if looking at a phone). Tell them not to let anyone else know which listening situation (active listening/poor listening) they will portray. Explain to the class that the goal is to observe the active listening skills being either demonstrated or ignored in each conversation. Each pair will go one at a time; the “talker” will talk for about 1 minute about their favorite hobby, holiday, food, place to visit, or some other “favorite”. The “listener” should demonstrate the skills as assigned. Have the class identify the skills being demonstrated or ignored and how the listener could have done a better job. Have those two students sit down and then ask two other volunteers to come forward. Repeat the exercise for each volunteer pair.

Active Listening Skills: Look at the person who is speaking, if culturally appropriate. • Maintain an open body posture. • Wait for the person to finish talking and then ask a question. • Give nonverbal cues such as nodding. • Summarize what the person said (this may start with, “What I hear you saying is....”).

For Partners
15 minutes



What Listening Means to Me

In pairs, have students pick and discuss what they think one of the following quotes about listening means. Then, ask pairs to come up with their own slogan or “quotable” tagline for active listening, specifically targeted at middle school students. After about 10 minutes, ask pairs to share their quotation interpretations and their newly written slogan or quote.

Quotes:

“There is a difference in listening and waiting for your turn to speak.” —Simon Sinek

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” —Bryant H. McGill

“Listening is about being present, not just about being quiet.” —Krista Tippett

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” —Winston Churchill

“You can’t fake listening. It shows.” —Raquel Welch

For Individuals
15 minutes



Active Listening Inventory & Goals

Give each student a piece of white drawing or printer paper. Have students determine on a scale from 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), where they believe they are at in their active listening skills (which includes looking at people, when appropriate; having an open posture; using appropriate nonverbal communication; asking questions; and summarizing). Have them draw that number, in large print, on their paper. Then, around that number, have students write down 3-5 (or more!) goals they will work on to become better active listeners throughout the rest of the Respect unit. Students can illustrate these goals, too, and/or decorate their number. On the back, have students write down the number they want to be at by the end of the unit. Remind them it’s important they have a reasonable goal, so even going up one number is a step in the right direction! They do not need to be at a 10. Have students turn these in, so you can hand them back out at the end of the unit and ask for a second self-evaluation.

Technology-Focused
15 minutes



Better Listening Through Technology

In a large group (or in small groups, and then reconvene as a large group), discuss whether or not technology makes us better listeners, and why. Be sure to differentiate between how technology has made us better hearers (improved hearing aids, improved phone technology, improved video conferencing) vs. better listeners.

Active Listening

In this lesson, students watch a brief video that explains what active listening is and how to engage in it. Students will then get an opportunity to discuss what they learned and then practice active listening and respectful communication by discussing a debatable issue with a partner.

Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

Required Materials

- ☐ Smartboard or other means of projecting the video

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Learn the components of active listening and connect them to respect and kindness

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Respect in the classroom begins with you. Hopefully you are working on how you can find ways to respect yourself. If not, it's never too late! Students will have a hard time respecting themselves if they don't see self-respect modeled for them. Remember how strong and good and valuable you are! Own that! This week, also evaluate how well you respect others. This may seem like a "no brainer" to teachers; we love our students and what we do! But, we all get tired, we all experience burn out, and we all have students who challenge us, especially as these middle school-aged kids start pushing some boundaries and experience some strong physical, mental, and emotional changes. In these times especially, remember that everyone deserves respect even if it doesn't feel like they have earned it. This doesn't mean we forego classroom management or discipline strategies, but we can approach every situation with respect and kindness. Some things to consider this week: How do you listen to your students (and to your colleagues, for that matter)? Do you listen to hear or listen to respond? How is your patience tank? Pretty full or running on fumes? Do you have parents who make it hard to want to show respect to them or to their students? When you feel challenged, tired, frustrated, or even sad, and struggle to respond in a kind and respectful way, remember that you are OKAY. Things will be OKAY. You can reinsert a measure of respect in a variety of ways: use active listening strategies, take five deep breaths before responding to a situation, use I-messages rather than you-statements, lower your voice and take a gentle approach to a challenging situation, or, call in backup (if you have a professional learning community [PLC] or teacher-partner and need a breather, ask for help!). You can grow in your ability to show respect for others, and if you fail, acknowledge it, apologize, and move on. Tomorrow is a new day.



Share

5-7 minutes

We are going to talk about how to be good listeners. One way to listen well to someone is called active listening. Does anyone have any ideas about what it means to be an *active* listener? (Invite student responses.)



Inspire

15 minutes

In this video, we are going to learn a bit more about what that means. As you watch the video, write down the points he lists about being an active listener.

“How to be an Active Listener” from Emery Bernardo (5 min 30 sec)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eHxNdIyo7g>



Empower

15 minutes

Let’s talk about what we just learned. What were the things Emery listed in the video that were important for being an active listener?

- Pay attention
- Be involved
- Have an open posture
- Ask questions to clarify points
- Summarize what you are hearing
- Use I statements to reflect what they said
- Don’t judge; don’t interrupt
- Respond appropriately, with kindness and understanding

What is the difference between hearing and listening? (Invite student responses.)

Now, everyone stand up. Emery also talked about body posture and body language as being important parts of active listening. We talked about body language last week, too. Body language, or our nonverbal communication, includes how we stand, what we do with our arms, our facial expressions, etc. Turn to the person next to you and on the count of three, take a body posture that shows you are not actively listening to them. One, two, three, go! Students should strike a pose. Comment on the various postures; you should be seeing arms folded across the chest, averting glances, maybe bodies turned away from their partner, scowls, looks of disinterest, etc.

Now, on the count of three, change your posture to one that you think represents active listening. One, two, three, go! Students should strike a new pose. Comment on what you see.

- How does this posture feel different from your first posture? (Invite student responses.)

- How does active listening show respect for the person you are talking to? (Invite student responses.)
- How does active listening show respect for yourself? (Invite student responses.)

This might be a little less obvious, but as discussed in the video, active listening can improve relationships. By being an active listener, you not only make the person you are listening to happy, but you can also make yourself happy. It feels good to respect others and to improve relationships. You will probably learn more, avoid conflict, and feel better about how you handled yourself and the other person. You will lower your stress responses and likely improve your reputation with those you communicate with, which shows that you respect not only others but also yourself. You respect yourself enough to ensure your interactions with others create a positive experience for you, too.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Now, you are going to practice active listening! You get the last five minutes to just talk to the person next to you! You can talk about anything you want, but work on the skills we just talked about. Watch your body language, ask questions, use non-verbal cues to show you are listening, and be present. Don't think about something else, but rather focus on the person in front of you. Do not look at your phones or other pieces of technology! Remember, be present!

You are going to pick one of these topics to discuss with your partner. You can either agree or disagree with the statement, and discuss your thoughts and why you think this way. Use active listening and respectful communication strategies for your conversation! I will be watching to see how you do! You can write the following topics on the whiteboard, project them on the smart board, or simply speak them a couple of times. Then, float around the room to observe the conversations.

- School uniforms should be a requirement for all schools.
- Professional athletes, movie stars, or musicians are paid too much money.
- Junk food should be banned from schools.
- Every student should play a musical instrument.
- Video games are too violent and should be eliminated.
- The school dress code is fair for both boys and girls.
- Year-round school is better for students.

With the last minute or two, highlight some of the positive, respectful conversations you witnessed and why. Remind students to use active listening today!