

Segment: Listening & Information Gathering

Lesson Title: Lesson 1: Listening & Information Gathering

Grade Band: 6-12

Approximate Time to Complete: 20 minutes

Objectives: Students will be able to demonstrate good listening skills.

Materials/Set up:

- Listening Techniques Worksheet (one for each student)
- If including the circle activity, then determine if the room will be pre-arranged in a circle format or whether the students will circle up as part of the activity.

Resource:

- Online Video Clip - [James Baker: The Man Who Made Washington Work: The Power Broker](#) (Watch 3:45-4:12)

Overview

Listening is a skill in itself. It is vital to effective communication, problem-solving, and negotiation. Students explore what it means to be a good listener, identify good listening attributes and learn about listening skills. This exercise includes class discussion and student demonstration. The lesson can be extended through a circle activity.

Instructional Plan

1. Inform the students that as a class they are going to explore what it means to be a good listener. Ask for two volunteers who would be willing to demonstrate listening in front of the class. Alternatively, identify two students ahead of time, request their participation, and prepare them for the activity, using the instructions in step # 2. If identifying students ahead of time, separately provide them with the instructions for the talker and the listener prior to the class. Talking with students ahead of time will provide them with time to think about their role and prepare prior to class.
2. One student will be the talker and the other student will be the listener. Invite the student who is the talker to step outside of the room and think of a story to share about a time when they were very excited or proud about something. Privately, ask the student who is the listener to act as a bad listener while the other student is talking. Provide the listener with some guidance on bad listening skills such as avoiding eye contact, interrupting, looking at a cell phone, fiddling with clothes or hair, and asking questions irrelevant to what is being shared, etc.

3. Instruct the class that two students will engage in a conversation in front of the class. The class is to observe what happens and be prepared to talk about it.
4. Invite the talker back into class and tell him or her to start sharing the story. The “bad” listener listens. Typically, at some point the talker will stop on his or her own. If not, stop the talker at the point where you feel the students have seen enough.
5. Ask the talker to share how he or she felt about the experience. Next turn to the class and ask, “What did you observe?” Highlight specific techniques that the “bad” listener used such as avoiding eye contact, interrupting, looking at a cell phone, fiddling with clothes or hair, and asking questions irrelevant to what is being shared, etc.
6. Distribute and review the Listening Techniques Worksheet.
7. Ask for a volunteer to listen to the talker tell the story again and use active listening skills.
8. Instruct the talker to share his or her story again to the student volunteer.
9. The class observes again. Tell the class to take notes on the listening techniques used by the listener.
10. Repeat the debrief asking the talker what he or she felt, and ask the class what specific techniques from the Listening Techniques Worksheet were observed.
11. Play Online Video Clip - [James Baker: The Man Who Made Washington Work: The Power Broker](#) (Watch 3:45-4:12). Ask “How did Baker present himself to members of Congress as a good listener?” Baker was careful to return all of phone calls from members of Congress so, even though he might never meet them in person, and might never pick up his phone when they called, returned their calls on the same day. This let them know that he was interested in what they had to say.

Additional Learning Opportunity

Conduct a classroom circle. Ask the circle prompt ask, “Who is someone in your life that is a good listener?” For the next round ask, “What is the impact of listening well?” For the final circle prompt ask, “What are ways that we are good listeners to each other during class?”

Information on leading an effective circle is found in the Educator’s Guide.

Listening Techniques

Listening is essential to good communication, but it's not always as easy as it sounds. Sometimes speakers hide their true feelings, avoid saying exactly what they mean, or reveal only pieces of a story. Active Listening focuses on the speaker and encourages open communication. Here are some tips for Active Listening:

- **Stay in the moment. Be Patient.**

Think about what the speaker is saying, not what you want to say next. While you're listening, put your views to the side while the other person speaks. Pause before you respond if you need to collect your thoughts.

- **Acknowledge the feelings you hear.**

Show that you understand the speaker's feelings, such as "You're really angry about this." or "It sounds like you were shocked he said that."

- **Notice more than words.**

What is the tone of voice? What are the facial expressions telling you? What is the body language telling you?

- **Practice empathy. Imagine yourself in the other person's shoes.**

Listen for the feelings expressed. Ask questions from the other person's point of view. Ask questions to make sure you understand what is important to the other person.

- **Show your interest.**

Make eye contact. Nod your head, or use phrases to encourage the speaker to continue, such as "Tell me more about..." or "What happened then?" Use neutral words which don't judge, blame, or draw conclusions too quickly.

- **Ask questions which clarify and explore what the speaker said.**

Clear up misunderstandings before you express your views. Ask for more information if necessary. Confirm a point of view before continuing, such as "Let me make sure I understand..." Summarize what you heard, and ask if you have it right.