

# Listen actively, respond appropriately

## Active listening skills that you should know about

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The act of listening has been a long-desired trait in any professional setup, because as much as composing a message is important to successful communication, listening effectively first lays the foundation of a well-composed message or response.

Active listening is a process through which an individual secures information from other individuals or groups. Listening actively requires paying attention to what's being said, while not interrupting the speaker and understanding the context entirely. The "active" aspect, however, requires some extra steps to complete the process of effective communication.

Active listeners avoid interrupting a speech at all costs, summarize what the speaker said back to them and support their response through appropriate body language. Active listening is a helpful skill for any professional, as it truly helps to understand what people are saying in a meeting or in a conversation (and not just what we want to hear or we think we hear).

This is also particularly helpful in job interviews, as candidates can leverage this skill to build a good rapport with the interviewer/ recruiting manager.

What is active listening?

Active listening is a soft skill, like critical thinking and problem-solving. Employers hold this skill in high regard because this is a critical skill to have for improving interpersonal communication. When interviewing for jobs, using active listening techniques can show the interviewers how your interpersonal skills can make you more fit for the job.

Active listening is a good technique to get out of our heads and redirect our focus

to actively listen to what's being said, you as a candidate will give off an impression of being interested in the organization's culture, challenges and priorities; being ready to solve problems along the way that might get in the way of work; and of being a team player who is not just another self-absorbed candidate validating only their own concerns and expectations from this job.

It is critically important not to interrupt someone's speech, and wait to respond until the speaker has finished talking. Asking

building trust.

Example: "Tell me what I can do to help you out in this project." or, "I went through your blogs and was impressed with how you donate 10% of your revenue to fund STEM projects in schools."

Demonstrating concern: Validating one's concern and offering help as needed. Example: "I know you're going through a tough time, I'm eager to help."

Asking open-ended questions: Asking questions that start with 'what, how, which, who'. Example: "I can see you are not happy with the output of the team. What changes would you like to see?"

Paraphrasing: Paraphrasing and summarizing the point the speaker is trying to make back to them for clarification.

Example: "So you are saying that your new manager is failing to understand your concerns as a part-time employee?"

Verbal affirmations: Show confirmation, support and empathy through verbal affirmations. Example: "Thank you for your time. I appreciate it." Or, "I understand that you'd want to monitor the team's progress more closely."

Sharing similar accounts from your experiences to create a sense of relatability: Share your experiences (if they are similar to the concerns raised by the speaker) and add insights if you have in a way that's not boasted.

Example: "I also had to work during the weekends for a month. Make sure you take care of yourself if it's too much on you." -- but a bad/ boasted response would be "I worked during the weekends for a month. It wasn't as painful for me as it is to you."

Frequent practising of these techniques can improve the quality of communication across all platforms and especially in workplaces. Not underestimating the power of soft skills at work is a good idea and improving these skills helps smoothen the professional journey of an individual.

The presence of technical skills coupled with the ability to communicate and team well with others is sought after by employers. For young professionals with limited experience, these people skills are considered a deciding factor whether the employer will take the risk of hiring someone young instead of experienced and seasoned professionals but with weaker interpersonal communication skills.



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questions for clarification is also important because the goal of communication is ultimately to avoid any misunderstandings.

Active listening techniques improve the quality of communication (and how you can do it)

There are plenty of active listening techniques that can help an individual improve their impression at a job interview. Most of these techniques are to establish to the speaker that they are being heard and realized by you. Some of these techniques include:

Building trust: To build trust with the speaker in a conversation, assure them of their willingness and capacity to add value to their concerns. Sometimes, giving them the assurance that you are aligned with their activities is also a good first step for

back to what message the interviewer or employer is trying to get across. It also helps reduce nervousness because it shuts out the blankness of "what to say next" in an interview or an important conversation.

When you have dedicated your focus



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