

Active listening? We're all ears.

Level: Advanced (C1–C2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Business topics: Leadership, communication, emotional intelligence, active listening

Business language: Useful vocabulary, business phrases, active listening phrases

Activities: Key words, understanding the text, business language, presenting tips to improve active listening

Groups: Whole class, one-to-one, small groups

Overview: This article discusses the importance of active listening in business, how to practise active listening, and the consequences of listening (or not).

1. Warmer

- a. With a partner or in small groups, students answer the three questions leading to the article. After discussing the points for a few minutes, get students to share their thoughts and ideas with the rest of the group.

2. Lead in – business dilemma

- a. Ask students to examine the dilemma individually before deciding with a classmate. This is a matter of opinion as long as students can provide arguments to support their views.

3. Key words

- a. Now, ask students to complete the activity. Encourage them to infer the part of speech of the missing word when selecting their answers individually. Then, ask them to work in pairs to compare their answers. Have them scan the text to see how each word is used in context.

Key:

1. *wariness (noun)*
2. *confrontation (noun)*
3. *empathetic (adjective)*
4. *attribute, attributes (noun)*
5. *insight, insights (noun)*
6. *bound (adjective)*
7. *pernicious (adjective)*
8. *knock-on (adjective)*
9. *disengage, disengaged (verb)*
10. *elicit (verb)*
11. *victimisation (noun)*
12. *looming (adjective)*

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to read the questions and then read the article in more detail to choose the best answer. Have them compare their answers in pairs before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

Data about listening and psychology	1. <i>Research shows that listening and reflecting back is the most effective form of therapy.</i>
Listening in business writing	2. <i>Empathetic listening is not a new idea. Covey wrote about it in 1989. Daniel Goleman also wrote about its importance.</i>
Listening in business education	3. <i>Most undergraduate business programmes focus on oral presentation; only just over a tenth include listening.</i>
How to listen	4. <i>Listen and ask interested questions. Reflect back and ask for more information. Summarise different points of view. (Listening isn't enough – you must believe you will gain insights by listening.)</i>

<p>What (not) to do after listening</p>	<p>5. Asking your employees questions of interest doesn't necessarily mean you will implement your findings.</p> <p>When reflecting back and asking for more information, it is essential to acknowledge what people have said and how they feel.</p>
<p>Why listening is important</p>	<p>6. By knowing that you have considered their points of view, those who disagree with you are more likely to cooperate.</p> <p>Listening can also avoid disaster – a culture of voicing doubt can save an organisation.</p>

5. Business language

- a. Ask students to work individually to form phrases and refer back to the text to check their answers.

Key:

1. give (it) a go
2. go through the motions
3. do something in good faith
4. go along with
5. stand out

- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups and share the meanings of these phrases. Encourage them to look at the text or consult more examples of the phrases in use online.

As an extension, you can ask students to write questions using the phrases and ask and answer these in small groups.

6. Business language – phrases for active listening

- a. Put the students in pairs and ask them to complete the activity orally. When students have discovered most of the phrases, elicit the answers and ask students to write them down.

Key:

1. So what you are saying is ...
2. Could you tell me a bit more about that?
3. What I'm hearing is that you ...
4. Let me make sure I've got this right ...
5. What led you to that conclusion?
6. I want to make sure we're on the same page ...
7. What do you mean when you say ...
8. I can especially relate to what you said about ...
9. I'm curious about the meaning of your last statement.

7. Discussion

- a. Put students in small groups. Ask students to discuss the questions. Encourage them to listen carefully to each other and use some of the previous activity's phrases to check understanding and show that they are listening actively.

8. Wider business theme – active listening

- a. Students can complete the research individually or in pairs.
- b. Then, have them create their infographic/poster/presentation slides individually. Ask them to practise giving their presentation in pairs and then regroup them. They can now present their research to different classmates or upload their recorded presentations online.