

Active listening

Gabrielle Jones

Age:	Adults
Level:	Intermediate
Time:	60 mins (90 mins with extension activity)
Aim:	To practise using question tags and showing interest
Key skills:	Listening, speaking
Materials:	One copy of Worksheets 1 and 2 per student; one copy of the cut-out cards per pair of students, cut up and shuffled

Procedure

1. Give each student a copy of Worksheet 1. Put the students in pairs or small groups, and ask them to discuss the questions in Activity 1.
2. Ask them how they knew the other person was listening to them.

Possible answers: *The listener nodded their head and made eye contact – non-verbal communication. The listener made minimal encouragements such as ‘mmm’ and ‘oh’, and asked questions – verbal communication.*

3. Ask them to read the conversation in Activity 2 and comment on how the listener (Mike) shows interest in what the speaker (Anya) is saying.

Key: *by adding questions tags (Do you? Did you? Have you?), and then follow-up questions to encourage the speaker to talk more*

4. Hand out one set of cut-up cards per pair and ask the students to lay them face up on the table.
5. Students match what Speaker A says with the question tag by Speaker B to form mini-conversations.
6. Draw attention to how the question tags are formed. Use the auxiliary (helping) verb – for example *can, have/has* – or the full verb *be* plus the appropriate personal pronoun to form the question. If there is no auxiliary or full form of *be* used in the original statement that you are replying to, use *do, does* or *did*.

7. Students can test each other on their ability to form question tags correctly. They should turn over Speaker B's responses, then take turns reading a Speaker A card to their partner. He or she must give the correct question tag.

8. Hand out Worksheet 2. Students complete the question tags with the correct verb.

Key: *1. Do you?; 2. Don't you?; 3. Can you?; 4. Can't you?; 5. Has he?; 6. Will she?; 7. Won't they?; 8. Is there?*

9. Returning to the cards, ask students to think of suitable follow-up questions for each mini-conversation in small groups.
10. Students compare their responses with someone from a different group, referring to the teacher if they have questions about grammar or vocabulary.
11. Now turn over all Speaker A's sentences so they are face down, and mix. Speaker B's responses can be put to one side.
12. Students take a Speaker A card and read it to a partner, who gives an appropriate reaction, i.e. saying a question tag and then asking a follow-up question. For example:
A: I'm an engineer.
B: Are you? Is that an interesting job?

Follow-up activity

Each pair or group of learners writes new opening statements on cards. They exchange their cards with another pair or group, and use their new cards to create mini-conversations as above.

Optional homework activity

Learners write a short dialogue between two people who meet in a social context, using questions tags and follow-up questions.

Activity 1: A discussion

Discuss these questions.

1. Which jobs need good listening skills? Why?
2. Do you need to be a good listener in your job?
3. What type of business activities benefit from really listening to other people?
4. How do you show someone that you're listening?

Activity 2: A conversation

Read the dialogue between two people at a company event.

Anya I work in the sales department.

Mike Do you? And how long have you been there?

Anya I started in January last year.

Mike Did you? And how are you enjoying it so far?

Anya I've been to four different countries this month!

Mike Have you?! That sounds exhausting! Is it?

Anya Absolutely!

How does Mike show interest in what Anya says?



Speaker A	Speaker B
I'm an engineer.	Are you?
I can speak Russian.	Can you?
I've been to America twice.	Have you?
I'm not feeling too good today.	Aren't you?
There are five new people here today.	Are there?
This meeting won't last long.	Won't it?
I live quite close to here.	Do you?
I don't drink tea.	Don't you?
I haven't been here before.	Haven't you?
My train was delayed this morning.	Was it?
I love this painting!	Do you?
My boss isn't here today.	Isn't he?



Complete the question tags that Speaker B uses to respond to Speaker A.

Speaker A

Speaker B

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. I live in Japan. | _____ you? |
| 2. I don't know him. | _____ you? |
| 3. I can speak Russian. | _____ you? |
| 4. I can't find my pen. | _____ you? |
| 5. My boss has a sports car. | _____ he? |
| 6. She'll be in London tomorrow. | _____ she? |
| 7. They won't be here tomorrow. | _____ they? |
| 8. There's a meeting in the morning. | _____ there? |

Now compare your responses with a partner.