

Lesson Plan 10: Active Listening

**60 minutes total**

Lesson Description



Participants will explore the concept of active listening and its impact on effective learning. They will also examine active listening strategies and use techniques to establish clear communication between trainers and learners.

Learning Outcomes



At the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of active listening for learning
2. Clarify and summarize given information accurately and effectively
3. Model active listening strategies

Materials



- Flip chart paper
- Paper
- Markers
- Pens/pencils

Preparation



- Read and prepare lesson plan
- Write learning outcomes on the flip chart
- Write the definition for “active listening” and “summarizing” on flip chart paper (See lesson plan)

Introduction

5 minutes

1. Ask participants: “How do you know if someone is really listening to you?”
2. As participants brainstorm ideas, write their responses down on the flip chart.
Examples might include: “Posture, facial expression, body language, nodding, etc.”
3. Review the responses, adding any ideas which are missing.
4. Explain to participants that our body language communicates whether or not we are really interested in, or listening to, a speaker.
5. Present the learning outcomes or lesson description.

Active Listening Skills**25 minutes**

1. Ask the participants: “We know what ‘Active Listening’ looks like, but how would you define it?” Ask a few participants to volunteer responses, then summarize and define active listening. Write the following on flip chart paper: *Active listening is a communication technique which involves giving free and undivided attention to a speaker, and seeking to understand both the content and underlying feeling or attitude behind what they are saying.*
2. Ask the participants: “How does this differ from just “listening”? *Listening is a passive process. Active listening facilitates clear understanding between people.*
3. Explain to participants active listening can be divided into 3 groups of skills: **Body language, following skills, and reflecting skills.** Write the 3 skills on flip chart paper.
4. Explain the first component of active listening is communicated through our body language and facial expression. Refer to the list on the flip chart from the introduction.
5. Explain the second component is known as following skills. These are skills which express the listener’s interest while still allowing the speaker to tell his/her story. Write the following on flip chart and discuss with participants:
 - Attentive silence
 - Verbal encouragement when appropriate (Ex: “Ahh,” “Right!” “And?”)
 - Infrequent and timely questions (Why did she...?)
6. Explain the third component is known as reflecting skills. These are skills where the listener re-states information with understanding. Often, we do this through clarifying given information, summarizing, or paraphrasing.

Clarifying**25 minutes**

1. Tell participants that they are going to practice one of the reflecting skills: Clarifying.
2. Explain that there are two ways for the listener to clarify given information:
 - Ask either open or closed probing questions to explore the speaker’s words more fully
 - Paraphrase what the speaker is saying and ask if you have interpreted it correctly.
6. Tell the participants you are going to say a vague WASH-related statement which needs to be clarified. You will divide them into 3-4 groups to create questions they would ask as follow-up to clarify the given statement and find out what you are *really* trying to say. Each group will have the same statement.
7. Divide participants into 3-4 groups then say a vague statement such as: “Hygiene is important in our household.”

8. Ask participants to take 2-3 minutes to brainstorm follow-up questions they could use to clarify the given information.
9. After 2-3 minutes, have each group volunteer a question. Record the questions on the flip chart. After each group has volunteered a response, if needed add additional clarifying questions such as: “*Why do you think...?*” “*Can you tell me more about...?*” “*What do you mean...?*” “*Did you mean to say...?*”
10. As a large group assess if the questions would help to clarify the meaning of the statement on hygiene.
11. Explain to participants that once you have clarified the given information, it is important to summarize the key ideas or concepts.

Summarizing

20 minutes



1. Explain that summarizing is another important reflecting skill that we are going to practice.
2. Ask participants: “What is meant by summarizing?”
3. After a few participants volunteer ideas, confirm and write the following on flip chart paper: *A summary should concisely describe the main idea of given information, include important details, and make connections.*
4. Ask participants: “Why is summarizing important?” *Summarizing helps us to ensure that what we hear is what the participant intended to say.*
5. Explain to participants that when summarizing, there are two key questions to keep in mind:
 - *What are the key details?*
 - *What information is irrelevant or unnecessary?*
6. Explain to participants you are going to give them a chance to practice their summarizing skills. Explain that you will tell the large group a short 2-3 minute story about a personal training challenge or highlight from your experience. As you tell the story, they should try to write a short 2 to 3 sentence summary of your story. At the end of the story, they will form partners and compare summaries.
7. Ensure all participants have a pen and paper, or are comfortable trying to summarize the story mentally if they prefer not to write.
8. Tell the participants a 2-3 minute story about either a training challenge you experienced, or a training highlight from your experience. *Try to share an interesting example and stay within the given timeframe. Too short will not provide enough challenge to summarize, and too long may overwhelm participants.*
9. After you finish your story, ask participants to form pairs and compare their summaries with their partner.
10. Ask participants to share any similarities or differences they noticed in their summaries. Despite everyone hearing the same story, interpretations will likely vary.
11. In the large group, ask participants to share their reflections on the activity.

The Importance of Active Listening**25 minutes**

1. Ask participants: "Why is active listening important?" Record responses on the flip chart.
2. Explain to participants that active listening is important for a trainer in two ways:
 - 1) We look for and observe active listening behaviors among our participants. If we do not see people actively listening in our training, we should do something differently to engage participants more fully.
 - 2) We use active listening to show our participants we are really listening to them and interested in the things they have to say. By modelling active listening behaviors we ensure that our participants feel listened to and validated.

Review**5 minutes**

1. Ask the participants to form pairs and discuss one thing new that they have learned about active listening they will incorporate into their work as a trainer. As they do so, ask them to focus on modelling their active listening skills – body language, following skills, and reflecting skills.

Reflections on Lesson