

Listening Skills

FACTSHEET

Participants need to listen to everyone's issues, but they also have a lot to say - and there's not much time!

-  **1 hour + debrief**
-  **4-15** (up to 3 groups of 4-5 per group)
-  **For staff at any level**
-  **No computer required**
-  **350** ex VAT



Learning objectives

- to demonstrate how most people fail to listen properly
- to balance active listening with communicating one's own points
- to know the main behaviours that hinder effective listening
- to know the main behaviours that help effective listening
- to identify where individual strengths and weaknesses lie - and what to work on

About the activity

This fun communication challenge is about balancing speaking and listening - and doing both well.

Participants prepare for a meeting. There are four people to each meeting. Each person has their own, specific brief which sets the scene and provides a list of issues - and opinions - that he/she must raise during the meeting. (This activity is not about role play). They also each have 10 counters. To speak at the meeting, a person must first put one counter in a central pot. They now speak and the others listen, but the speaker must stop and give way if another person drops a counter in the pot. The objective for each person at the meeting is to listen to what everyone else has to say AND communicate their own issues and opinions. At the end of the meeting, participants complete an Analysis Form to assess how well they listened.

The analysis demonstrates how participants nearly always underperform when compared with their expectations. They realise, along with everyone else, how little they know of what was said and how much they misunderstood. We have good intentions but we are also easily distracted. Eye contact goes, we lose focus, thoughts stray and attitudes and emotions get in the way! Staying an ACTIVE listener isn't easy! This activity leads into a discussion about what traits show in poor listeners and the key behaviours in effective listeners (full guidance in Trainer's Notes).

Some participants can act as Meeting Observers. It's optional but they have an important role in recording the ebb and flow of the meeting, and can offer useful meeting reviews for the debrief.

Pack contents

- Trainer's Notes
- Sets of Briefs
- Name Plates
- Counter Cups
- Sets of Counters
- Observer's Forms
- Sets of highlighter pens
- Analysis Sheets
- Handout: Tips for Better Listening

Ideally suited to

Any training or assessment course on effective communication and in particular those designed to improve people's performance in meetings.

It's also ideal for identifying leadership potential and leadership training - listening is a life-skill and a key attribute of a good and compassionate leader.



Listening Skills

Customer reviews



We all like to think we listen to our customers and staff but Listening Skills helps to measure just what we hear and retain. It's *great fun* and turns a soft skill from subjective feelings into hard data.

David Schofield, Lloyds TSB



Listening Skills helps focus our training and *works well* as a group activity. We used it as an ice-breaker and as part of a teamwork training module.

Catriona Dick, University of Strathclyde



Listening Skills showed *how we can improve* individual and organisational performance if we communicate effectively.

Peter Grundy, Bank of America



Trainer's role (full guidance supplied in Trainer's Notes)

- Introduce the activity explaining that they are all taking part in meetings and the emphasis is on effective listening.
- Divide the group into sets of four (using any 'overs' as Meetings Observers).
- Allocate a set of four name-plates, counter cup and counters to each set of four people.
- Allocate a set of four Briefs to each table so each person receives the Brief that corresponds with their name-plate (no conferring between the four people).
- Allow them 10 minutes to prepare for a meeting.
- Meanwhile issue an Observer's Form and a set of highlighter pens to each observer and explain their role.
- Announce the start of the meeting. Explain it will last for 20-30 minutes.
- After 30 minutes, stop the meeting and issue Analysis Sheets.
- Allow 10-15 minutes for completion.
- Go through the Analysis Sheet.
- Lead a Debrief on the main learning points, and issue the Key Points Handout.

Northgate says...

The fun, and seemingly lighthearted, scenario melts inhibitions so that participants are open to assessing themselves and taking on board what they need to do to improve.

Delegates tend to fall into the pitfall of concentrating on what *they* want to say rather than actively listening to the others!

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