

## Lesson plan: Active listening

When networking either for work or in a social setting, a key skill is *really* listening to the person you are interacting with. Try this sample lesson from **Open Mind Pre-intermediate (B1) level\***, which looks at the essential skill of active listening, and highlights techniques such as focusing on the speaker, using verbal and non-verbal techniques to show interest and responding appropriately to what you've heard.

**Level:** Pre-intermediate / CEFR B1

**Time:** approx 60 minutes (or longer depending on how the activities are used)

**How to use this lesson:**

The lesson can be used for the whole class, who can work in groups of three. Download and print out the [Student's Book pages](#) so each student has a copy and download the related [audio files](#).

\* Can also be used with **openMind** 2nd edition level 2

**Step 1:** Stop what you're doing and focus on the speaker.  
(Ex. A, Ex. B)

**Step 2:** Use verbal and non-verbal techniques to show you are listening. (Ex. C, Ex. D)

**Step 3:** Respond to what you have heard. (Ex. E)

**Lead-in**

- Read the target skill aloud and **highlight** the three-step strategy to develop the skill. Check that the students understand all the vocabulary.
- Ask the students if they think they are good listeners or not. Elicit some characteristics of good and bad listeners, and write these on the board, e.g. *good listeners don't interrupt all the time; bad listeners are always thinking about what they are going to say next*.
- **Highlight** the importance of non-verbal techniques as well as verbal techniques to show you are interested when you are listening. Elicit what the non-verbal techniques could be (*nodding and smiling to show agreement, shaking your head to show disagreement, raising an eyebrow to show surprise, maintaining eye contact*).
- Discuss any active-listener gestures like the ones in the box that are specific to your students' cultures.

**A**

- Before you ask the students to do this exercise, check that they understand the expression *arms folded*. Ask them to show you by demonstrating the action. If necessary, demonstrate it yourself.
- Ask the students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs. Check the answers with the class.

**ANSWERS**

- a** eye contact, 'open' body language, interested facial expression
- b** bored facial expression, no eye contact, 'closed' body language

**Extra: talking about pictures**

Invite the students to talk about the two photos as a class. Ask them to tell you what the people in the photos are doing, and discuss if the listeners are interested or not. For example: in the first photo, the woman on the left is making eye contact; she has an interested facial expression; she also has open body language; she is smiling; she is listening to the other woman. In the second photo, the woman has a bored facial expression; she has closed body language; she isn't making eye contact.

**B**

- Ask the students to read the three statements first.
- Ask them to read the text and circle the correct option for each statement.
- Ask them to compare their answers in pairs.
- Check the answers with the class. Make sure they give reasons or indicate the relevant sentence in the text for their answers.

**ANSWERS**

1 F 2 F 3 T

**C (audio track 19)**

- First, ask the students to read the list of verbal responses. Point out that these are all ways of showing the speaker that you are interested in what they are saying, you are following what they are saying, and that you want to keep the conversation going.
- Make sure the students understand that in the listening task they have to identify which words and phrases are used.
- Play the recording once, and check the student's progress. If necessary, play the recording again. Check the answers with the class.

**Audioscript for track 19**

**James:** So, Martin, have you done much travelling?

**Martin:** Yeah, I have, actually. I love travelling, so I usually try to visit a new place every summer.

**J:** That's great! What places have you visited?

**M:** Well, I've travelled a lot in Europe. You know, lots of places in France, plus Spain, Germany, Italy and Poland. Brilliant! And what about other countries?

**M:** I've been to the United States and Canada, and I've also been to South America.

**J:** Really? Which countries?

**M:** Last July I went with my family to Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

**J:** Wow!

**M:** Yeah, it was fantastic. Of course, it was winter there, and we went skiing in Chile.

**J:** That's amazing!

**M:** Yeah, it was really great. We saw a lot of beautiful places, ate fabulous food, and had lots of fun.

**J:** Oh, how nice!

**M:** Yeah, it was. What about you? Have you ...

**ANSWERS**

That's great! Brilliant! Really? Wow! That's amazing! Oh, how nice!

## D

- Ask the students to read the model conversation.
- Put the students into groups of three (A, B and C) to do the task. Make sure that all the students understand all the vocabulary on the card of Student A.
- Ask Student A to read the list of topics and choose one to talk about. Encourage Student A in each group to make notes about the topic.
- Ask Student B to look at the four active listening techniques on the cue card and use these when listening to Student A.
- Ask Student C to read the form and check they understand all the sections in it.
- Now ask Student A to talk about his/her topic, Student B to listen and Student C to observe and complete the form.
- Make sure the students swap roles twice so they all take a turn at all three tasks.

## E

- Ask the students to discuss how effectively each of them listened, using their evaluation forms.
- Ask them to discuss how they can improve their listening techniques.

## REFLECT

- Ask the students to read the **Reflect** question.
- Give them some time to think about different situations in the domains of **Work and Career** and **Study and Learning** where the skill of active listening would be useful.
- Elicit the following ideas: meetings at work, seminars or group discussion in a place of study, listening to instructions at work, talking to clients, etc.

### Extra: discussion

To give further practice in active listening, ask the students to discuss some of the other topics in the list.