



Active listening

Active listening is an essential skill that can help you to improve your communication skills, learn more effectively, and take more accurate notes.

What is active listening?

Active listening is different from 'normal' listening in that it is a *deliberate* act of listening that requires the listener to **minimise distractions** and **suspend their own biases** or ideas to consider what they are learning in an objective way. Throughout the process of listening, the listener may **engage with the speaker** to test their understanding.

Understanding can be tested by:

- Asking questions
- Writing a summary of what was understood
- Comparing notes with another listener or other sources

How can I listen more actively?

- **Give the speaker your full attention.** If you are listening to a lecture, try to be in a place with minimal distractions. Place your mobile phone out of your line of sight.
- **Listen with an open mind.** Don't let your prejudices or assumptions get in the way of understanding the speaker's intended message.
- **Pay attention to the non-verbal cues** the speaker may be using to emphasise points.*
- **Ask the speaker questions** or paraphrase what you've understood to check your understanding.
- **Make notes** to help with memory retention.

***Non-verbal cues** are messages someone sends you through gestures, facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. A tutor may signal information that's important for an assessment by changing their tone of voice to emphasise certain points. Make a note of these moments, as they may save you time when preparing for your assessment.