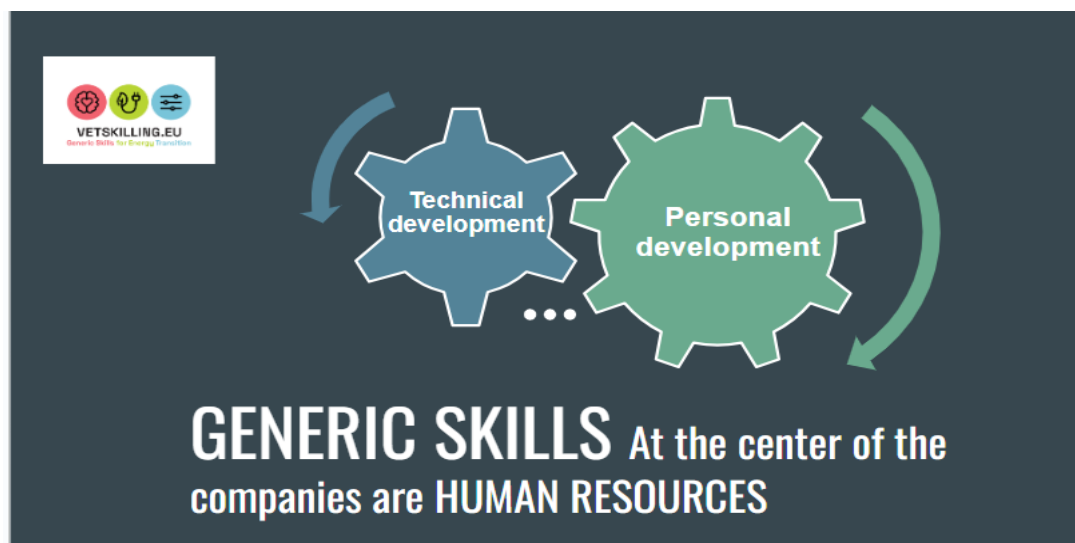


GENERIC SKILLS: Enhancing Active Listening in the Professional Setting



Generic Skills-Active Listening-Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of active listening in the professional context.
2. Identify common barriers to effective listening.
3. Practice active listening techniques to improve interpersonal communication.

Dynamic's Structure:

I. INTRODUCTION

Exercise 1. Introduction of myself

Exercise 2. The insight moment

II. KEY CONCEPTS

Exercise 3. Measurement of the level of active listening

Exercise 4. Distinguishing active listening and passive listening

Exercise 5. Eye contact

Exercise 6. Smiling

Exercise 7. Body position and distance

Exercise 8. Gestures and words showing interest

Exercise 9. Paraphrasing/Summarizing

Exercise 10. Information chain

III. EVALUATION TOOL

- Evaluation Rubric.

I. INTRODUCTION

Active listening plays an essential role in the professional realm and can have numerous positive impacts on one's career. Here are some key points to discuss regarding its importance:

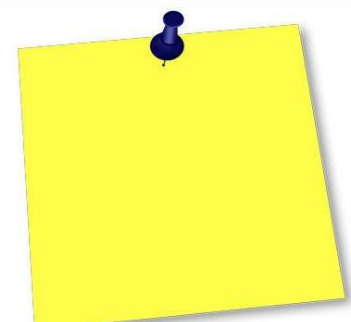
- I. **Enhanced Understanding:** Active listening allows professionals to fully comprehend instructions, feedback, and information provided by colleagues, supervisors, clients, or customers. This understanding is crucial for performing tasks accurately and efficiently, leading to improved job performance.
- II. **Building Strong Relationships:** By actively listening to others, professionals demonstrate respect, empathy, and interest in their perspectives and concerns. This helps in building strong and positive relationships with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders, fostering trust and collaboration essential for success in any professional setting.
- III. **Effective Problem-solving:** Active listening enables professionals to grasp the root causes of issues, concerns, or challenges raised by others. By understanding these issues thoroughly, they can devise more effective and targeted solutions, contributing to problem-solving efforts within their teams or organizations.
- IV. **Conflict Resolution:** In the workplace, conflicts are inevitable. However, active listening skills empower professionals to navigate conflicts more effectively by understanding the underlying reasons for disagreement and finding common ground. This leads to smoother conflict resolution processes and preserves harmony in the work environment.

- V. **Improved Leadership Skills:** Effective leaders are not only proficient speakers but also attentive listeners. Active listening allows leaders to understand the needs and aspirations of their team members, provide meaningful support and guidance, and make informed decisions that benefit both individuals and the organization as a whole.
- VI. **Career Advancement:** Professionals who excel in active listening often stand out in their workplaces. Their ability to communicate effectively, collaborate productively, and build strong relationships sets them apart as valuable assets to their organizations. Consequently, they are more likely to be considered for promotions, leadership roles, and career advancement opportunities.

Conclusion: Active listening is not just a soft skill; it is a cornerstone of success in the professional realm. By honing this skill, individuals can significantly enhance their performance, relationships, and prospects for long-term career growth and fulfillment.

Exercise 1. Introduction of myself. Sitting on a chair making a large circle we answer the following 4 questions with a single word in a post-it. So, we will write only 4 words in the post-it.

- What is my greatest talent?
- What is my favourite hobby?
- What is my favourite food?
- What is my name?



Then they **will stick the paper on our foreheads** and walk in a circle around their chairs. When the music stops, they have 1 minute **to memorize** each partner's information. After some presentations the students will **transmit the information** they remember one by one about the partner they can remember.

Exercise 2. The insight moment. Before working on pairs, first, you are going to fill in the following battery of questions individually for a few minutes:

Insight moment

● **Your best characteristic:**

● **Your weakness:**

● **A wonderful memory:**

● **A book you liked:**

● **A fill you hated:**

● **Favorite music group:**

● **A characteristic you prefer in a friend:**

● **A Characteristic you cannot stand in a friend:**

● **A Characteristic you value the most in a friendship:**

● **Your dream:**

● **Your idol:**

● **What quality you prefer in a teacher**

The question wheel

- A memory
- A book or film you liked
- Favorite music group
- A quality you prefer in a friend
- What you can't stand in others
- What you would like to do for a living
- Your idol is...
- What you value in a good friendship
- Who you would like to travel with
- What quality you prefer in a teacher
- Your friends like you because...
- I am a crack because...
- Four things you like:
- Four things you don't like:

- **Your friends like you because...**
- **Four reasons to join in this international experience:**
- **One thing you like the most in this international experience:**
- **One thing you would change in this international meeting:**
- **How you think others see you:**
- **What is the most important to you?**
- **Something you are proud of:**
- **What did you had dinner yesterday:**

First **one partner will start** talking **while the other listens actively** with all senses. The couple is sitting opposite each other without any objects in the middle. After the first volunteer has finished, the other person starts.

This activity is essential to experience **the effort involved in actively listening** to a partner as well as to experience the sensation of feeling when someone is listening to you with all their senses. The level of friendship and happiness increases.

II. KEY CONCEPTS

Active listening is the ability to listen to the other person with complete attention and empathy.

People who are good listeners are more appreciated among their friends. They show helpfulness and closeness and generate trust and security feelings in their friends.

On the other hand, **people who are not good listeners** tend to cause more rejection among their friends. These people show distance and generate unpleasant feelings such as sadness, anger...

Below there are the major differences between the active listening and passive listening:

★ **Engagement:**

- **Active Listening:** Involves actively participating in the conversation by providing feedback, asking questions, and showing interest in the speaker's message.
- **Passive Listening:** Involves simply receiving information without actively engaging with the speaker or providing any form of feedback.

★ **Attention:**

- **Active Listening:** Requires full attention and concentration on the speaker's message, including verbal and non-verbal cues.
- **Passive Listening:** May involve partial attention or distractions, with the listener not fully focused on the conversation.

★ **Feedback:**

- ★ **Active Listening:** Involves providing verbal and non-verbal feedback to the speaker, such as nodding, paraphrasing, or asking clarifying questions, to demonstrate understanding and engagement.

- ★ **Passive Listening:** Typically lacks feedback, as the listener remains silent and does not actively respond to the speaker's message.

- ★ **Understanding:**

- **Active Listening:** Focuses on understanding the speaker's message, intentions, and feelings, often through active engagement and empathy.
- **Passive Listening:** May result in limited understanding or misinterpretation of the speaker's message, as the listener may not fully process or engage with the information.

- ★ **Communication Dynamics:**

- **Active Listening:** Enhances communication dynamics by fostering a reciprocal exchange of ideas, promoting trust, and building stronger relationships between the listener and the speaker.
- **Passive Listening:** May lead to one-sided communication dynamics, with the listener passively receiving information without contributing to the conversation, potentially hindering effective communication and rapport.

- ★ **Purpose:**

- **Active Listening:** Often used in situations where understanding, problem-solving, or building relationships are the primary goals, such as in counseling sessions, negotiations, or team meetings.
- **Passive Listening:** May be sufficient for situations where simply receiving information without active engagement or feedback is all that is required, such as listening to a lecture or announcement.

Overall, active listening involves active engagement, attention, feedback, and understanding, while passive listening is more about simply receiving information without active participation or engagement with the speaker. Both listening styles have their place depending on the context and communication goals. However, active listening is generally considered more effective for building rapport, understanding, and meaningful communication.

Exercise 3. Measure your level of active listening and reflect on our strengths and weaknesses. Use this questionnaire for students to self-assess their active listening skills and gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement in this crucial skill.

| | ACTIVE LISTENING SKILL | MARK (1-10) *1 no skilful *10 very skilful | ME |
|----|--|--|-------------|
| 1 | Mindfulness: How focused are you during a conversation to fully understand what the other person is saying? | 1=Very low 10=Very high | 6 (example) |
| 2 | Empathy: How often do you show understanding and sensitivity towards the feelings of the speaker? | 1= Never 10 = Always | |
| 3 | Asking Clarifying Questions: How well do you use questions to gather more information and clarify any misunderstandings during a conversation? | 1=Very poorly, 10=Very well | |
| 4 | Paraphrasing and Summarizing: How skilfully do you repeat or summarize what the speaker has said to confirm understanding and demonstrate active listening? | 1= Very poor 10= Excellent | |
| 5 | Eye Contact and Body Language: How consistently do you maintain eye contact and use open and receptive body language during a conversation? | 1= Very little 10 = A lot | |
| 6 | Respect: How often do you show respect for the opinions and feelings of the speaker, even if they differ from yours? | 1 = Rarely, 10 = Always | |
| 7 | Constructive Feedback: How effectively do you provide constructive and respectful feedback during a conversation to demonstrate active listening? | 1=Very ineffective 10=Very effective | |
| 8 | Problem-Solving: How well do you understand the problems or concerns raised by the speaker and contribute to finding effective solutions? | 1 = Very little 10 = A lot | |
| 9 | Emotional Engagement: How emotionally connected do you feel with the speaker during a conversation, demonstrating your ability to empathize? | 1=Very disconnected 10=Very connected | |
| 10 | Clarity in Communication: How clear are you in communicating during a conversation, avoiding confusion or misunderstandings? | 1=Very unclear, 10=Very clear | |

Once the group of students has completed the test, we will talk openly by answering the following questions among all the class:






- Which aspect has the lowest score?
- Which aspect has the highest score?
- Which aspect do I need to strengthen?
- Which aspects are the most important for my life?

Exercise 4. Distinguishing active listening and passive listening. They are two distinct approaches to receiving and processing information during a conversation. Let's discuss the differences. Each working group has to stick down the key words for each type of listening (annex 2) after watching the following 2 short videos:

1. [The Big Bang Theory Active Listening](#)
2. [Active Listening: Katie Owens at TEDx](#)

| ACTIVE LISTENING tips | PASSIVE LISTENING tips |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| ● | ● |
| ● | ● |
| ● | ● |

ACTIVE LISTENING-TIPS.

| EYE CONTACT | SMILING | BODY POSITION AND DISTANCE | GESTURES AND WORDS SHOWING INTEREST | PARAPHRASING/SUMMARIZING |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |

Exercise 5. Eye contact.

In groups of 2 people and at a distance of 1.5 meters we sit (without any objects in the middle) and look into each other's eyes **for 2 minutes with full attention and without talking**. The partners should NOT be friends.

The aim is to experience a connection between the participants, as looking into each other's eyes with full attention increases the level of intimacy and closeness.

- [4 minutes social experiment](#)
- [Look Beyond Borders - 4 minutes experiment](#)

Afterwards the whole group will have to **answer the following questions**:

- Was it easy or difficult to maintain eye contact with the other person?
- What emotion did you feel?
- In your life with whom do you find it easiest to maintain eye contact and most difficult?

Exercise 6. SMILING. Identify the type of the smiles from the photos below.

Real/Authentic or social smile? “Your smile is seen, heard and transmitted”

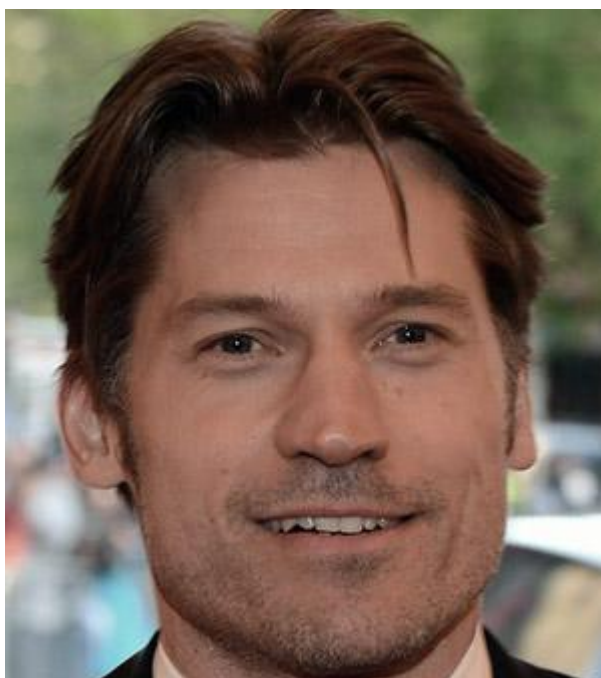
The smile is an important element to make a good first impression. In this exercise we will learn to distinguish an authentic and spontaneous smile from a false or social smile.

In a genuine smile (real smile), the eyes close slightly and form a few small wrinkles or "crow's feet" in the outer corners. In addition, the corners of the lips are raised revealing usually the gums.

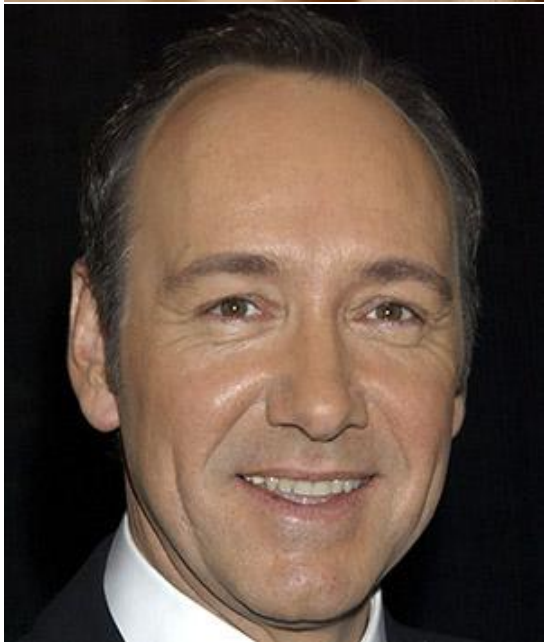
In the social smile, however, the eyes do not close as much as in the authentic smile and it is usual that the "crow's feet" do not occur. Also, the commissure of the lips is raised, but not as much as in the genuine smile. People who show a genuine smile are really happy, and those who show a social smile are not truly happy, but this does not mean that they are fake, but are trying to be nice or are trying to create a pleasant climate.

Information videos to learn more about it.

- [Real vs Fake Smile](#)
- [How To Spot A Fake Smile](#)







Answers:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1-Authentic smile | 6- Authentic smile |
| 2-Social smile | 7-Social smile |
| 3-Social smile | 8-Authentic smile |
| 4-Authentic smile | 9-Authentic smile |
| 5-Social smile | 10-Social smile |

Exercise 7. Body position and Distance

Students are asked to work with new partners; it is better if they are not close friends or if it is possible for couples formatted from different gender. They sit facing each other and with background music. They are not allowed to speak any word or to make any gesture.

When all the students get to be quiet, the teacher must start explaining the activity. The activity consists of transmitting a message through the eyes. The message can be:

- A friendship message
- A hate message
- A happiness message
- A love message

Students have 5 minutes to transmit their message. Once the time is over the couple will change their functions.

After the two members of the couple have finished this activity, all the class must answer the following questions:

- What do you get from the message?
- How do you feel?
- Do you feel comfortable? Why?

- What were the difficulties?
- What was easier to transmit the message or to get the message properly?

Conclusion: The importance of the gaze in the communication process. People need to develop other channels of communication that are not based on only words.

Exercise 8. Gestures and words showing interest

Divide the class into small groups. One student will talk about a specific topic for 2 minutes (the topic can be the explanation of the student's last weekend; what did you do last weekend?).

At the same time, the listeners must demonstrate interest by using active listening behaviours, such as:

- Verbal affirmations** like "Uh-huh," "Interesting," "I didn't know that," etc.
- Gestures** like nodding, smiling, maintaining eye contact, or leaning forward.

Afterward, the group discusses how the listeners' words and gestures helped maintain or enhance the conversation.

| GESTURES | WORDS/PHRASES |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| NODDING | I SEE, I UNDERSTAND |
| SMILING | "Uh-huh" "I understand" |
| LEANING FORWARD | "I didn't know that" |
| RAISE YOUR EYEBROWS | "Right" |

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| RELAXED HANDS | "Got it." "Okay." |
| HEAD TILTING | "I hear you." |
| GESTURES OF AGREEMENT | TELL ME MORE |

Why it works: It encourages students to pay close attention and integrate both verbal and non-verbal signals of interest into their conversations, which is especially valuable in client-vet interactions.

Exercise 9. Paraphrasing/summarizing. We are going to work in small groups. One volunteer is going to read a piece of news. The other students are going to listening it actively and make some actions of Summarizing and Paraphrasing:

- "To summarize, you're saying that..."
- "So, what I'm hearing is that you were [feeling/action], and that led to [outcome]."
- "If I could paraphrase what you said, you're feeling..."
- "You seem to be saying that the situation was [emotionally intense]."

Plants "Talk" – Especially When They're Stressed

Scientists have known for years that plants respond to sounds around them. For example, flowers make sweeter nectar to the sound of buzzing bees. But now scientists have shown that plants also seem to be doing some "talking".

Sounds and Frequency: Sound is made by vibrations. Things that vibrate slowly make low sounds. Rapid vibrations – like those from a whistle – create high sounds. Scientists use the word "frequency" to describe how rapidly or slowly something is vibrating. Some sounds are so high that humans can't hear them. These sounds are called "ultrasonic" sounds. Dogs and cats are known for being able to hear ultrasonic frequencies.

Professor Lilach Hadany and her team at Tel Aviv University set up microphones to record tomato and tobacco plants under different conditions. Their recordings revealed that the plants made ultrasonic sounds.

When the researchers adjusted their recordings so that humans could hear them, they heard sharp clicking noises, like the snapping sound of bubble wrap being popped.

As the scientists studied the sounds, they began to notice patterns. Plants clicked hardly at all when they had enough water. But as their soil got drier, they clicked more and more.

When scientists cut off a stem from the plants – as if an animal had just taken a bite – the plants also clicked more. But the clicking wasn't the same as when the plants needed water.

It's not clear how the plants make the sounds. One idea is that air bubbles form inside the plant's stem, and that these popping bubbles make a clicking sound. It's also not clear that the plants are making the sounds on purpose. Sometimes people's knees creak, too, but they're not doing it on purpose.

But the plants are definitely making noise, and creating much more noise when they're stressed (not enough water, stem cut off) than when they're not.

The result suggests that researchers may one day be able to use a plant's sounds to figure out when it is having trouble, and what trouble it is having. That could be very helpful to farmers.

Exercise 10. Information chain.

In groups, one student will read a part of a real news story to a member of the group. Then one by one the first volunteer will have to remember the news and tell as much as possible to his/her partner. And so on, until all participants have had the opportunity to be counted and tell the news. The fifth volunteer will tell the news out loud to his or her group.

"Teenagers Start 'World's First' Sleepover Marathon—Without Actually Sleeping"

In a bizarre twist to the classic sleepover, a group of teenagers in a small town in Ohio decided to host what they're calling the "World's First Sleepover Marathon" — with one strange twist: no one was allowed to sleep.

The event, organized by a group of high school friends who were tired of the usual "Netflix and snack" routine, quickly gained local attention as more and more teens joined in. The plan? Stay awake for 48 hours, perform various challenges, and keep everyone entertained without once hitting the pillow. "We wanted to make it like a marathon, but instead of running, we'd be, like, running on energy drinks and bad decisions," said one of the organizers, Jake Thomas.

The challenges were nothing short of absurd. One involved trying to eat spaghetti with chopsticks while blindfolded, another was a competition to see who could make the most outlandish TikTok dance, and a third required everyone to wear socks on their hands and attempt to "high-five" each other without using their thumbs. "We were basically inventing new ways to waste time," Jake laughed.

Things took a turn when participants began getting delirious from the lack of sleep. At one point, two teens accidentally walked into a neighbour's house thinking it was their own, and another participant, Sarah, tried to convince everyone that she had invented the "Nap Dance" and could perform it by pretending to fall asleep mid-dance.

The most remarkable part of the event was when a group of parents, initially concerned about the lack of sleep, showed up with pizza at 2 a.m. and ended up joining the festivities, donning sleep masks and participating in the "Nap Dance" (despite not actually being able to sleep). The teens then joked that the parents were "cheating" by sneaking in naps between pizza bites.

By the end of the marathon, the teens were so tired they could barely speak, but they had created what they referred to as "the most epic, sleep-deprived bonding experience ever." The next morning, they took a group photo where everyone, despite being exhausted, wore big, goofy smiles. The photo now hangs in the local community center as a reminder that sometimes, the most bizarre ideas are the most fun.

"I'm not sure what we learned," Jake admitted at the end of the event, "but I think we've set a new standard for what a sleepover should be. Just no more 48-hour marathons. Ever."

Conclusion: Our brain cannot retain all the information. The brain picks up only part of the message, which is why active listening plays an essential role in understanding the message and being able to process it properly.

In the world of work, there is no leader without active listening skills.