

# Simple Guide to Active Listening for Parents/Guardians

## How to Do It:

Listening is a really important life skill for parents. When your child feels listened to, they will feel like you understand them. Here are the steps to listen actively to your child:

### 1. Concentrate completely on what your child is saying

Hearing is not listening. You should stop what you're doing and get close to your child. Make eye contact with them if it seems natural in the setting so that your child knows they have your full attention. Focus on what your child is saying.

### 2. Avoid interrupting

Let your child finish their sentences at their own pace. It may be hard for them to find the correct words to use. Show your child that you are interested by nodding your head and making comments like "I see"

### 3. Repeat back to your child what they said

Once your child has finished speaking, say back to them what you've understood. It doesn't need to be the exact words – you can add details and suggest an emotion that they may be feeling. If you've got it right, your child will agree and if they are feeling something else, they will let you know. You can also ask questions to clarify your understanding but make sure that you are not changing the topic.

Listening is not the same thing as agreeing. You can understand and respect another person's point of view without agreeing to it.

## Benefits of Active Listening:

An essential ingredient of strong, healthy relationships is good communication. And successful communication depends a lot on how you listen.

By using active listening, you can strengthen your communication and improve your relationship with your child. This is because active listening shows your child that you care and are interested. It can also help you learn and understand more about what's going on in your child's life and avoid conflict caused by misunderstandings.

With active listening, you don't have to talk too much. It can take the pressure off you to come up with answers and solve problems. Active listening can also make it more likely that your child will ask you what you think.

Talking to you is good for your child's thinking processes too. It can help him to think more clearly.

## Improving Your Active Listening Skills:

### Get into the here and now

This means really paying attention. If you notice your mind has wandered, bring it back to what your child is saying.

Adapted from: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/> and <https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/communicating-relationships/communicating/active-listening>

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When your child is talking to you, it can help to turn off the TV, your mobile phone and other devices. If you give your child your undivided interest and attention, it sends the message that your child is the most important thing to you right now. It says that you're available and interested in what she's thinking, feeling and doing.

### Try to understand

Concentrate on what your child is saying rather than thinking about what you're going to say next. Are you missing his point while you think about your own? What is he trying to tell you and why?

### Show that you're trying to understand

Summarize your child's main points and how you think she might be feeling. Try repeating what your child is saying in your own words. For example, 'Let me see if I've understood. You're feeling angry because I didn't talk to you before making plans for this weekend. I can understand that'.

Try to avoid making judgments when you summarize what your child has said. For example:

- It's judgmental to say, 'You want to stay out too late'.
- It's nonjudgmental to say, 'You want to stay out until midnight'.

Often when you use active listening and repeat back your child's words, **it's like an invitation to say more**, because your child feels heard. It can encourage him to explain further or say more about what he's thinking.

### MORE:

Watch a video clip from 90s sitcom Everybody Loves Raymond where Raymond puts active listening into action.

