

Active listening requires that the listener fully concentrate, understand, respond and then remember what is being said by another person. Here's how to do it.

Let's break it down into nonverbal cues, verbal cues/behaviors, and strategies:

Nonverbal Cues.

- Look interested.
- Maintain eye contact
- Face the person directly
- Sit upright, but be comfortable
- Nod occasionally to indicate that you are listening
- Try to put your feelings/reactions on hold until you hear the other person out
- Monitor your facial expressions so that you don't convey disagreement, irritation, or negative emotions until you hear the person out (you can react later)

Verbal Cues

- Ask questions:
 - To clarify and to show that you are truly trying to understand
 - To summarize ("What I hear you saying is _____, correct?")
- Don't change the subject or stray off-topic
- Focus on what the other person is saying (you will get your turn later)
- Summarize what you heard

Strategies

- Be fully attentive and other-focused (all too often listeners stop really listening and try to formulate what they are going to say, determine why the other is wrong, or assume they already know what they are going to say)
- Imagine that you are an interviewer or journalist and you are trying to get all of the facts straight
- Observe the speaker's [body language](#) and facial expressions. Try to understand both what the other person is saying and how they are saying it. What emotions are they feeling and expressing (or trying to conceal)?

Active listening is not easy. It takes a great deal of practice and can sometimes be taxing.

Communicate back what you understood ... including the emotions.