

Page 1: 10 Essential Ideas on Active Listening

Active listening is a structured communication technique that requires fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is being said. Below are 10 core principles and techniques for practicing active listening.

Idea / Technique	Core Concept & Practice
1. Paraphrasing & Clarifying	Restate what the speaker said in your own words (e.g., <i>"It sounds like what you're saying is..."</i>) to confirm accurate understanding before moving forward.
2. Asking Open-Ended Questions	Pose questions starting with "How," "What," or "Why" rather than simple yes/no questions to encourage deeper sharing and elaborate context.
3. Avoiding Early Judgment	Refrain from making swift evaluation or criticism while the speaker is talking. Strive to grasp the intended meaning without filter.
4. Practicing Reflective Pausing	Allow brief pauses after the speaker finishes before immediately blurting out a response, demonstrating thoughtful consideration of their input.
5. Controlling Distractions & Quieting Internal Dialogue	Silence electronic devices and quiet internal planning about "what to say next" to grant complete cognitive presence to the speaker.
6. Reading and Demonstrating Non-Verbal Cues	Pay attention to body language and tone of voice while using eye contact and supportive gestures (head nods, open posture) to communicate engagement.
7. Validating and Empathizing	Acknowledge emotional state and perspective (e.g., <i>"I can see why that situation felt frustrating"</i>) to build trust and psychological safety.
8. Refraining from Interruptions	Exercise self-control by waiting until the speaker completely finishes their thought before contributing your perspective or asking a question.
9. Summarizing Key Intervals	Periodically synthesize the main points covered during long conversations to ensure both parties remain aligned on facts and next steps.
10. Recalling Previously Shared Information	Reference details or insights mentioned in past conversations to show attentiveness, care, and continuous listening over time.

Page 2: Resource Attributions & Corresponding Recommendations

Below are the specific sources, active links, and the exact recommendation numbers each resource supports:

- **MIT Human Resources — Active Listening Guide:**

Supports Recommendations: #1 (Paraphrasing & Clarifying), #2 (Asking Open-Ended Questions), #5 (Controlling Distractions), #6 (Non-Verbal Cues), #7 (Validating and Empathizing), #8 (Refraining from Interruptions), and #10 (Recalling Shared Information)

Provides foundational guidance on rephrasing statements in your own words, maintaining non-verbal cues, avoiding interruptions, and referencing prior details.

[MIT Human Resources Guide](#)

- **Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) — Active Listening Techniques:**

Supports Recommendations: #1 (Paraphrasing & Clarifying), #2 (Asking Open-Ended Questions), #3 (Avoiding Early Judgment), #4 (Reflective Pausing), #5 (Controlling Distractions), #6 (Non-Verbal Cues), #7 (Validating and Empathizing), #8 (Refraining from Interruptions), and #9 (Summarizing Key Intervals)

Details how to ask exploratory questions, allow wait-time before responding, suspend judgment, and mirror emotions to foster trust.

[Center for Creative Leadership Article](#)

- **Teachers Institute / Indeed Career Development — Responding Effectively:**

Supports Recommendations: #2 (Asking Open-Ended Questions), #4 (Reflective Pausing), #8 (Refraining from Interruptions), and #10 (Recalling Shared Information)

Covers pausing before answering, letting the speaker finish completely, and drawing on prior context in future conversations.

[Teachers Institute Article](#)

- **UC Berkeley Executive Education — Communication & Engagement:**

Supports Recommendations: #5 (Controlling Distractions) and #7 (Validating & Empathizing)

Focuses on eliminating internal and external noise to remain fully present, alongside acknowledging emotional perspective to build psychological safety.

[UC Berkeley Executive Education Blog](#)