

Listening & Genuine Inquiry Learning Experiences 25

[Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)

Grade Level Range: Middle School - Adult

To Teachers:

Before beginning, please make sure you have:

1. Read the Introduction to Teaching Healthy Relationships and Relationship Skills ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)) for suggestions on teaching social-emotional skills, processing learning experiences, applying skills in real-life situations, and assessing, evaluating, and grading SES.
2. Taught students how to role-play, observe, coach, and give feedback; see the Role Playing, Coaching, Observing, & Giving Feedback Reading & Process ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)) for detailed information on how to set up and teach role-playing that uses students as coaches and observers (who provide feedback). In addition, see Observing Giving Feedback Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))
3. Read the Listening & Inquiry Reading ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))

These learning experiences provide multiple opportunities for students to identify what others are feeling and become skillful passive and active listeners and skillful at asking genuine inquiry questions when they do not fully understand. It would be helpful to have completed at least one of the Non-Listening learning experiences, especially Non-Listening # 1 ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)), since the “Their Story” they developed is needed for one of the listening learning experiences outlined below. Students must understand the importance of being an effective passive and active listener, why we don’t listen, and the impact not listening has on relationships. See the Listening & Inquiry Reading ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)).

Introduction To Teaching Listening

1. If you have not recently completed the Non-Listening LE # 1 ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)), assign the “Their Story Learning Experience” for homework in the class before (see below for the directions to “Their Story”).
2. Brainstorm why people don’t listen and how not listening affects relationships. Then, brainstorm why listening and understanding what someone is saying is important. See the Listening & Inquiring Reading ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)). Add any reasons your students don’t identify.
3. Explain that they will be role-playing during the following weeks. They will have the opportunity to role-play, observe, coach, and give feedback on what they observe.

4. Distribute the Listening & Inquiry Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)), The Observing & Giving Feedback Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#)), and the Listening Skills Observation Form ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))
5. Review the process for completing the observation form and the process for giving feedback (on the Observing & Giving Feedback Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))). Demonstrate how to provide feedback.
6. When teaching these skills, the skill cards must be used until students can use the skills successfully without them.

Procedure/Directions For Teaching Passive Listening

1. Next, review the passive listening behaviors (“Paying Attention, Showing Interest, and Using Brief Door Openers”) on the Listening & Inquiry Skill Card and demonstrate how to use them.
2. Explain that you will ask volunteers to share “Their Story” with you in front of the class. While you are role-playing, everyone else is to observe you and complete the Listening Skills Observation Form for the passive listening behaviors (Paying Attention and Showing Interest and Using Brief Door Openers)
3. Have a volunteer read their “Their Story” while you demonstrate effective passive listening.
4. After demonstrating effective passive listening behaviors, ask the volunteer and the class if they are sure you were listening and understood what was said. Point out that although it is essential to be a good passive listener, it is possible to use effective passive listening behaviors but not be listening or understand what someone is saying. Discuss how, as students, we have used effective passive listening behaviors while looking at the teacher while not hearing what they are saying or understanding what they are saying.
5. Ask several more volunteers to share “Their Story” with you while you demonstrate effective passive listening skills. While you are role-playing, the rest of the class is to complete the observation form. When you finish each role-play, ask for volunteers to give you feedback on your passive listening skills. Provide them with feedback on their feedback skills. In addition, ask the person you were role-playing with if they felt listened to and if they felt that you were interested in them and understood what they were saying. Ask them what contributed to their feelings.
6. You may ask several more volunteers to read their “Their Story” while you demonstrate effective passive listening. This will provide additional practice for observing and giving feedback and allow them to see the passive listening skills in action.

Procedure/Directions For Teaching Active Listening

1. When done with role-playing passive listening, review the active listening behaviors and demonstrate how to use them.
2. Discuss how active listening involves communicating that we are listening, that we are trying to understand, and that we are considering what they are saying. This is done by summarizing in our own words what the speaker said and identifying what we think they feel, even if they didn't state the feeling.
3. Read aloud several situations below, trying to capture the speaker's emotions. Ask volunteers to share what they think the person is feeling and then paraphrase as if they are actively listening. See how many different feelings they identify for each situation. Provide feedback on their active listening responses.
4. Next, ask for a volunteer to read "Their Story" while you passively and actively listen.
5. When you are done role-playing, ask the volunteer and the class if they are sure you were listening and understood what was said (and why or why not). Point out that you must have been listening to summarize/paraphrase and identify unspoken feelings.
6. Ask other volunteers to share "Their Story" while you passively and actively listen. During these role plays, have everyone else observe you.
7. When you have completed each role-play, ask a volunteer to give you feedback. Give them feedback on their feedback skills. In addition, ask the person you were role-playing with if they felt listened to, if they felt that you were interested in them, and if they felt that you understood what they were saying. Ask them what contributed to their feelings.

Procedure/Directions For Teaching Genuine Inquiry Questions

1. Next, explain that when we don't understand, don't understand completely, are confused, or need more information, we must ask genuine inquiry questions.
2. Review how to ask genuine inquiry questions using the Listening & Inquiry Skill Card. Demonstrate the use of these skills.
3. Now, ask a volunteer to read "Their Story" while you passively and actively listen and ask genuine inquiry questions. During these role plays, everyone else is to observe you.
4. When you have completed each role-play, ask a volunteer to give you feedback. Give them feedback on their feedback skills.
5. Point out that the only way to fully communicate that we are listening, that we are trying to understand, that we are interested in them, and that we are considering what they are saying is to passively and actively listen and ask genuine inquiry questions.

Putting It All Together: Role Playing All The Skills In Small Groups

1. After you have completed role-playing with the groups in front of the class, divide the class into groups of 4.
2. Provide them (one at a time) with the role-playing situations below. Select those that are developmentally appropriate for your students. It is suggested that you develop situations, and you may also ask students to generate their relevant situations.
3. In their groups, have them determine how they will respond. They then take turns role-playing in their groups. Everyone in the group should be able to role-play, coach, observe, and give feedback. After each role-play, the observer provides feedback.
4. The coach will coach the role-player if and only if they get stuck. The coach's main role is to note what worked well, what didn't, and what, if anything, they would have done differently.
5. First, have each group agree on how to respond to the situation. It may be helpful to have them write out their responses.
6. When they have determined how they will respond, they start role-playing. After each role-play, the observer provides feedback using the process on the Observing & Giving Feedback Skill Card.
7. The group then changes roles for the next situation.
8. While small groups are role-playing, you can circulate to gather information about students' competency. When walking around, you can intervene to improve effectiveness, correct misunderstandings and misconceptions about the use of the skills, and reinforce the appropriate and competent use of the skills. You will need to decide whether to intervene with a specific group or wait and process with the entire class. The information you gather will help you determine if you need to reteach and role-play how to use the skill or whether a simple reminder will suffice.
9. After each group has completed all the role-plays, bring the whole class back together to process. Questions include:
 - What skills did you use effectively, and what skills do you need to get better at or do more consistently?
 - Which skills were easiest and why?
 - What skills were the most difficult and why?
 - What skills do you think will be easiest to use in real life, and why?
 - What skills will you have the most difficulty with when you use them in real life and why?
 - What was it like to give feedback?
 - What was it like to receive feedback?
 - Was it easier or more challenging to give feedback or receive it? Why?
 - What would make it easier to receive feedback?
 - What would make it easier to give feedback?

Their Story Learning Experience

Assign the following for homework to allow students plenty of time to complete it. They are to write a story about some area of interest or something significant that happened to them, something they recently did, or something they are planning to do. They should number each sentence and start a new line for each sentence. They need to write about something they are willing to share with the class and write at least ten sentences.

Role Playing Situations:

1. "I can't believe I downloaded this new operating system on my phone. I'm so stupid. I cannot use half of my apps now. Why did I ever do that? I knew I shouldn't do that now, yet I did it anyhow" (Angry, frustrated, annoyed). A possible active listening response: "It seems like you are frustrated and beating yourself up because you went ahead and did something that you thought you shouldn't do and, as a result, aren't able to use different functions on your phone?"
2. "I shouldn't have said that to Jamie. It was really mean for me to have said that." (Regretful, embarrassed, angry at self, disappointed in self). A possible active listening response: "I get the impression that you are feeling guilty that you said those things to Jamie?"
3. "I can't believe you told them what I said. I told you not to tell them. I can't believe you did that. (Disappointed, hurt, frustrated, angry). A possible active listening response: "I can see that you are disappointed in me for telling them?"
4. "I think my brother is hanging out with the wrong group of people. I don't like his friends. I think he is going to do something that will get him in bad trouble." (Worried, concerned, nervous, upset). A possible active listening response: "It seems that you are worried that your brother's friends are a bad influence and that he is going to end up getting in trouble?"
5. "I cannot stand being around my parents. They fight all the time. What am I going to do?" (Worried, concerned, frustrated, afraid). A possible active listening response: It seems to me you are worried about your parents because they always fight, and you don't know what to do about it?
6. "I can hardly believe it. This is one of the best things that ever happened to me. (Excited, happy, thrilled, surprised). A possible active listening response: "I can see that you are really excited about what happened, and you consider it one of the best things that ever happened to you?"
7. "I just can't seem to figure this out." (Frustrated, irritated, thwarted). A possible active listening response: "It appears to me that you are annoyed because you cannot figure this out?"
8. "Great, there are only ten more days until vacation. I am so looking forward to vacation". (Excited, thrilled, hopeful, happy, eager). A possible active listening response: "It sounds like you are excited about the upcoming vacation?"

9. "I'm not having any fun. I can't think of anything to do" (Bored, frustrated, fed up). A possible active listening response: "It seems to me that you are feeling bored because you cannot think of anything fun to do?"
10. "That new teacher gives us too much homework. I can never get it all done. What am I going to do?" (Frustrated, angry, worried, nervous, agitated). A possible active listening response: "Let me see if I understand. It seems that you are worried that you have so much homework and that you are worried that you won't get it all done in time? Is that right?"
11. "Why did she make me stay after school? I wasn't the only one fooling around. She has it out for me." (Angry, frustrated, irritated, discouraged). A possible active listening response: "It seems like you are angry because you think the teacher singled you out?"

Other Role Play Situations

Outlined below are other situations to role-play. Continue to have students work in groups of 4. Read the situation, trying to capture the emotions of the speaker. Ask each group to develop an active listening response and then ask several students to stand and role-play the situation with you being an effective passive and active listener. Give them (and thus the whole class) feedback on the extent to which they were effective passive and active listeners.

- 1) Your parent walks into your bedroom. Two days ago you had promised to clean it and didn't. It is a complete mess. Your parent says: "What's this. You promised to clean it up and you didn't. This is a total mess. I cannot trust you to do what you say you will do. You are completely unreliable. You always say you are going to do something, then you don't. I don't know why I even bother."
- 2) You are watching TV after school. You are not allowed to watch TV until your homework is done and you haven't started. Your parent comes home and says: "Is your homework done?" You say, "No." The parent says: "I just cannot believe it. How often have I told you that you aren't allowed to watch TV before you finish your homework?"
- 3) Your parent is checking your grades online and notices that you have several missing assignments and your grades have dropped in two courses. Your parent says, "What's the matter with you? We have been over and over this, and you still haven't made any changes. Don't you care about your future? Don't you want to go to college? Do you care at all about your future? I care more about your future than you do. I don't know why I bother. Go ahead, make a mess of your life."
- 4) You have been fighting with your younger sibling. Your parent enters the room and says: "I've had enough. I've told you time and time again not to fight with ... Go to your room and don't come out until I tell you."
- 5) You said that you would get dinner on the table by the time your father got home so he could make an event that was very important to him and that he was looking forward to. You forgot. He walks through the door, notices dinner isn't even in the oven, and says to you: "I cannot believe this. I ask you to do one small thing so that I can go to this important event and now I will be late because I have to prepare dinner. You let me down."

- 6) You get your report card, and your grades are less than what your parents expect. You give it to them, and they take one look and say, “I cannot believe this. Are you trying to do poorly?”
- 7) You have done something that emotionally hurts your best friend. You realize it. They say: “You are a bad friend. I cannot believe that you would do this to me.”
- 8) You agreed to be home by 11 PM. You were out with friends and having a great time, so you decided to stay later. You knew if you texted your parent and asked if you could stay out later, they would probably say no, so you didn’t text. At 11:50, you walk through the door. Your parent jumps up from the couch and starts yelling at you about how irresponsible you are and how they thought something had happened to you. They tell you to get to bed and that you are grounded for at least two weeks.

If you said this to a parent, what is an effective active listening response from them?

- 9) “You never take me anywhere, and I miss out on so much with my friends. Why don’t you give me the keys to the car, and I’ll drive myself?”
- 10) “Will you make up your mind? You treat me like a child, but then you expect me to act like an adult. So what is it?”
- 11) “You don’t care about me. You are always taking their side (a sibling). You never listen to my side. You love them best, and don’t try to tell me that you love us equally; otherwise, you wouldn’t always take their side?”

Play Stump The Teacher

Ask for several volunteers to share made-up stories with you that have a lot of emotion. It could be something they have seen on TV, a movie, or something online, or they could share a recent experience or something they are planning. The purpose is to see your effectiveness as a passive and active listener and ask genuine inquiry questions. Your role is to model the skills of passive and active listening and the asking of genuine inquiry questions. You could also have them use the Listening Skills Observation Form and give you feedback.

Recommended Follow-Up

Even if you can spend several classes on listening and asking genuine inquiry questions, students will need more time using these skills to become proficient. Throughout the year, using the same process outlined above, have students share a “story” about something that happened to them recently and/or something they are planning on doing.

Throughout the year, the beginning and ending minutes can be used to practice these skills. Examples of how to use several minutes at the beginning or end of class include:

1. Have students pair up with a person sitting next to them. Read a situation and have each group develop an active listening response with genuine inquiry questions. Randomly call on students to role-play with you, ensuring they passively and actively listen and ask genuine inquiry questions.
2. Periodically, have students pair up and share a recent experience that generated strong emotions. They take turns sharing their experience while their partner passively and actively listens and asks genuine inquiry questions. Randomly call on students to share their partner’s story.
3. After a long weekend, holiday break, or vacation week, have students pair up and share a pleasant and unpleasant feeling they experienced during the break. They take turns sharing their experience while their partner passively and actively listens and asks genuine inquiry questions. Randomly call on students to share their partner’s story about their pleasant feelings. Ask volunteers to share their stories about the unpleasant feeling while you passively and actively listen and ask genuine inquiry questions. This is also an effective way to reconnect with your students after a long break.
4. Share a recent personal experience and have students develop an effective passive and active listening response with genuine inquiry questions.
5. Whenever you are frustrated by something your students have done or have not done, express your frustration and have them develop an active listening response with genuine inquiry questions.
6. Whenever you explain something, you can randomly call on students to summarize.

Follow-Up Learning Experiences: Applying Listening & Inquiry Skills In Real Life Situations

1. It is not enough to have students only use skills in class. They must be given opportunities to apply skills in real life outside of class. Using skills in real-life situations, processing the results, and modifying their response is necessary and must be continuous and ongoing.
2. Students develop a goal to be more assertive using the My Goals Log LE and the My Goals Log ([SES Projects Module](#)). Using the My Goals Log allows students to change their behavior and develop goals that do not require much analysis or the exploration of alternatives and choices. The My Goals Log can be used to have students develop goals and evaluate their success at the midpoint and again at the end of the project.
3. Have students develop and implement the Listening & Inquiry Project ([SES Projects Module](#)). The purpose of this project is to facilitate the development of competency in passive and active listening and asking genuine inquiry questions in real-life situations. It is a more extensive project than the My Goals LE ([SES Projects Module](#)). It requires students to monitor their progress over time using self-monitoring charts and doing self-assessments of their effort, their progress, and/or the extent to which they completed the project. It is found in [Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#).

Assessment & Grading

Assessing students' understanding of the steps for actively listening is one of the easier social-emotional skills to grade. A test or quiz can be given by reading several statements aloud and having students write their responses as if they are actively listening. For example, you say aloud with frustration: "*I cannot believe this assignment. I cannot figure out the directions*". An example of a complete response that would earn 4 out of 4 points would be: "*It seems to me that you are frustrated because you cannot figure out how to do the assignment?*" One point is given for starting with "It seems to me," 1 point for identifying the unspoken feeling of frustration, another point for paraphrasing the reason for frustration, and a point for saying it with a question in their voice—the question mark at the end. A rubric or a Likert Scale could be used to assess their response. See the examples below. For additional information on assessing and grading SEL skills, see How To Assess & Grade SES in the [Assessment & Grading Module](#).

Depending on your class size, you could call students up one at a time while the class is working in groups, read the example above, and then use the Likert Scale below to assess their response.

Specific Rubric For Evaluating the Understanding/Performance of A Skill: Active Listening

90-100 Demonstrates proficiency in the use of Active Listening. Can Actively Listen without Error.

80-89 Actively Listens without significant error.

70-79 Makes several errors when Actively Listening but can complete a rough approximation.

60-69 Makes critical errors when attempting to Actively Listen.

50-59 Makes many critical errors when attempting to Actively Listen.

40 Unable to assess the ability to Actively Listen because the skill demonstration was incomplete or the demonstration was not done.

A Specific Licker Scale For Assessing The Understanding/Performance of a Skill: Active Listening

When Summarizing What The Speaker Said, Use phrases like “It sounds like...?” “It seems to me...?” and “I get the impression that you are...?”

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective

Paraphrased & Summarized Feelings Even If Unspoken

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective

Paraphrased & Summarized The Content of What Is Said And/or The Reasons For The Feelings

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective

Summarized With A Question In Their Voice

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Not Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective