



Listening Summary

Why Listening?

Your child's success depends upon their ability to listen and understand what you and others are communicating. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship while building essential listening skills in your child.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and actively building a healthy parenting relationship will support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *"Do you feel listened to? When and by whom?"*
- *"How do you know that the person is truly listening to you?"*
- *"Are there times when someone is not listening to you?"*
- *"How does that make you feel?"*

Tip During a family meal, explore the question: "What does it take to listen well?" Allow each family member to respond. Model listening by allowing each person to complete their thoughts without interruption or judgment.

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Model listening while interacting with your child. Notice your body language. Ask: *"What is my body communicating, and how am I demonstrating that I'm listening?"*
- Listen for thought and feeling. In addition to listening to the content of what your child says, also see if you can identify the unspoken thought and feeling behind the content, in other words, the context.
- Build a sacred time into your routine when you are fully present to listen to what your child has to tell you.
- Learn listening strategies together by trying them out.
 - Demonstrate poor listening and good listening. Act it out, and then reflect and ask: *"What did you notice about her body language?"*
 - Actively listen. One person listens to fully understand what the speaker is saying and waits until the speaker is finished talking before responding.

- Paraphrase. Echo back to the speaker a summary of what they've said to check how accurate your listening is and also to confirm that you have heard them (*"I heard you say that..."*).
- Seek clarification. If you are listening with the intent of learning something from the speaker, seeking clarification on details is important to make certain you understand: *"What did you mean when you said you weren't happy this morning? What happened?"*
- Practice questioning and commenting with empathy. Instead of responding to a speaker with your own experiences, focus solely on the content of what has been communicated. Your child: *"Today Mrs. Smith started a new project. We are going to be building fairy tree houses. I can't wait."* You: *"Sounds like you are excited about this project. What else besides sticks do we need to collect?"*

Tip Use the "Me Too!" rule so that each person can complete a thought without interruption.¹ Agree with family members that when someone is saying something that is true for them as well, they make the "Me too!" sign – shake your thumb pointing back at yourself and pinkie pointing out at the other person.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow to Skills and Develop Habits

- Use "Show me..." statements like *"Show me how you can listen at dinner without interrupting."*
- Recognize effort: *"I noticed how you listened fully to your sister when she was upset. That's so helpful to her."*
- Play listening games.
- Read together.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's Development and Success

- Ask key questions: *"Seems like you were having a difficult time not interrupting when your friend was talking to you. What were some of the struggles you encountered? What would have helped you to actively listen in that situation?"*
- Learn about your child's development. Each new age will present different challenges.
- Stay engaged. Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Engage in further practice. Play listening games to reinforce skills.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

Trap When your child does not listen to you or is clearly focusing elsewhere, you might be tempted to scold or nag, but be sure and give them additional chances. Everyone loses their focus sometimes. Get down on their level, eye to eye, and review what you said again to help them refocus their attention. End with a smile or hug to reinforce your connection.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: *“I notice you listened with focus to your sister’s story. I know that makes her feel cared about. That’s so important.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

Reference

1. Williams, S. [Listen Effectively. Leader Letter.](#) Dayton, OH: Wright State University Raj Soin College of Business. Retrieved on 5-20-14.

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