

Active listening with children: tips

Active listening is key to good communication and great for your relationship with your child. That's because active listening shows your child that you care and are interested in them. It can also help you learn and understand more about what's going on in your child's life.

Here's **how to do active listening** with your child:

- Use your body language to show you're listening. For example, face your child and make eye contact. If your child likes to talk while doing activities, you can show you're listening by turning to look at your child and getting close to them.
- Watch your child's facial expressions and body language. Listening isn't just about hearing words, but also about trying to understand what's behind those words.
- Build on what your child is telling you and show your interest by saying things like 'Tell me more about ...', 'Really!' and 'Go on ...'.
- Repeat or rephrase what your child has said from time to time. This lets your child know you're listening and helps you check what your child is saying.
- Try not to jump in, cut your child off, or finish sentences – even when your child says something strange or is having trouble finding words.
- Don't rush into problem-solving. Your child might just want you to listen, and to feel that their feelings and point of view matter.
- Prompt your child to tell you how they feel by describing what you think they're feeling – for example, 'It sounds like you felt left out when Felix wanted to play with those other kids at lunch'. Be prepared to get this wrong, and ask your child to help you understand.

When you show your child how to be a good listener, you help your child develop their listening skills too.

Encouraging your child to listen: tips

Children often need some help learning to listen, as well as some gentle reminders about letting other people talk. Here are some ideas to help with your child's listening skills:

- **Be a good role model.** Your child learns how to communicate by watching you carefully. When you talk with your child (and others) in a respectful way, this gives a powerful message about positive communication.
- Let your child finish talking and then respond. This sets a good example of listening for your child.
- Use language and ideas that your child will understand. It can be hard for your child to keep paying attention if they don't understand what you're talking about.
- Make any instructions and requests simple and clear to match your child's age and ability.

- If you need to provide constructive feedback, give some positive messages at the same time. Your child is more likely to listen to praise than to criticism or blame. For example, 'You're usually so good at remembering to put your lunchbox in the dishwasher. Could you remember tomorrow please?'