**Teaching Active Listening Skills** Active listening is an important part of any successful interaction. Increasing a student’s active listening skills will improve a student’s overall communication skills.

There are various activities that can help students become better listeners. These activities not only teach them to pay attention to what others are saying but also understand it without being distracted.

**Activity Ideas for Teaching Active Listening Skills**

**Group Juggle**

This activity is suitable for all age groups. It requires a large space as it involves physical activity. The teacher can also participate in this game. Make the group stand in a circle. The teacher then calls out a student's name and passes a soft toy or a ball to him, who in turn passes it to another person after calling their name. This process continues and everybody gradually becomes alert in order to catch the ball immediately after their names are called out. The element of surprise will make them listen more carefully and watch out for their names. This activity works well for improving concentration and listening skills.

**Various Sounds**
The students can sit quietly and listen to what they hear in their environment. Make a list of the things they can hear.

Listen to different sounds on your Smart Board (water flowing, bubbles, animals, bulldozers, musical instruments, etc.) Ask the students to identify the sounds they are hearing.

**Cause and Effect**

Encourage active listening by asking the students to listen for specific words, phrases, animals, etc. and then having them perform an action.

Read Brown Bear, Brown Bear what do you see? Give each child a picture of an animal in the story. As you read the story, the students can listen for their animal and bring their animal up to the front at the appropriate time. Or, assign each student a certain animal and give them the picture of the animal glued to a stick. When their part of the story comes up, they can wiggle around their animal. You could also ask them to help chant their section of the story or make the animal sound.<http://www.dltk-teach.com/books/brownbear/index.htm>

Sing Old MacDonald with your students. Give each of them a farm animal. Have each child put his animal inside the fence when he hears the name of his animal or the sound of his animal.

Read the Stone Soup Poem and have the children put the ingredients into a big pot. The ingredients can be real, plastic objects, or even just pictures. Give each student an ingredient and tell them to put it in the pot when they hear it in the poem.

Read The Three Little Pigs to your students. Give them each a container and some chips, pennies, etc. Ask them to drop a chip in the container each time they hear the phrase “big bad wolf.”

**Telephone Game**
Start by saying a sentence to the first child. You will need to whisper the sentence in her ear. Listen carefully as the second player whispers the sentence to the third player. The sentence is then repeated in whispers by the players until the last player in line has heard it. The final player in the telephone line will repeat the sentence as he heard it.

Make the game even more difficult by having noise such as a radio in the background. This will really require the players to concentrate on what the others are whispering as the message makes its way through the line.

This activity will teach students that active listening is an important part of effective communication and helps everyone convey their messages clearly.

**Clapping Game**

The clapping game is another fantastic way to improve a student's listening skills. Hide an object that won't be real easy to find. Once the object is well hidden, have the student open his eyes or return to the room, and while using clapping commands, have the student search for the object. [The closer](http://voices.yahoo.com/topic/35079/the_closer.html) the child is to the object the louder you should clap. The better the child's listening skills, the better he or she will become at this fun and easy game.

**Simon Says**

Simon Says is a classic listening activity. Have your students gather together and listen for when to mimic Simon. Common phrases are “Simon says touch your toes,” and “Simon says turn around,” but watch out! Their time is up when they continue to follow the facilitator instead of Simon. Start slow, and as this activity progresses throughout the year you should see your students become more effective listeners. After all, the harder you listen in this activity, the longer you can play!

**Cloze Techniques**

As you read a story to your class purposefully leave off words and eventually phrases from sentences. After the students are familiar with a story, you can expect them to provide the missing word or phrase.

Remember that there are many benefits to reading the same story on several different occasions.Nursery rhymes, rhyme books and pattern books are all great choices for cloze activities.

 Examples:

Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great \_\_\_\_\_\_ (fall)

 Silly Sally

Silly Sally went to town,

walking backwards, upside \_\_\_\_\_\_ (down)

On the way she met a pig, a silly pig

they danced a \_\_\_\_\_ (jig)

 Brown Bear, Brown Bear What do you See?

Brown Bear, Brown Bear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (what do you see)?

I see a redbird looking at me.

Red bird, red bird \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (what do you see)?

I see a yellow duck looking at me.

**Nonsense Examples**

**Say silly things in the story**

Then Red Riding Hood went swimming

Then Red Riding Hood said OK mom I WILL talk to strangers.

Then the wolf went to McDonald’s to get a burger.

**Say silly things in your own directions**

So you want to glue the paper on your nose

OK we need to lay on the floor to sing O Canada

OK who can help put the snack in the garbage

**Say silly things at circle time**

Call the students by the wrong name

Point to a visual schedule and say the wrong thing

**What Am I?**

Have all of the students sit together. Provide sounds, descriptors, and even impressions for these deductive reasoning activities. Some examples could be: car, apple, duck, and a teacher. If the answer is car you could state: how they can be many sizes and colors, but they must be big enough to sit in, they sound like “honk, honk,” and when I am in one I can travel anywhere (while you are mimicking steering a steering wheel). The children will have to listen for the clues to come up with the answer!

**Wh-Questions?**

Ask wh- questions as you read a story to the class. Use/show wh-questions cards when you are asking about a story.

Encourage the children to ask questions to guess the leader. For example, “Is it a boy or a girl?” “What color is his hair?” “What color is his shirt?” “What sound does his name start with?”

Consider having a student keep their show and tell a secret. Turn it into a guessing game. Encourage the students to ask questions to gain information about the show and tell item. For example, “How big is it?” “Where did you get it?” “What can you do with it?” “Who gave it to you?” “When can you use it?” “What sound does it start with?” You can use the wh-question cards to help with this process.

After you have given an instruction such as “Get ready to go to the gym”, ask the question “Where are we going?”

Encourage students to answer in sentences.

**Tell Your Story** (a more advanced activity)

For this activity, make the group sit in a circle. The teacher then gives the title of the story and narrates the first few lines. The teacher then asks a student to continue the story on the same lines of the previous speaker. This continues till all the members get a chance to tell the story. The trick here is that all the members should repeat what the previous person has said and add to the story as well. Besides, the story narrated by all the members should be along the same line. The member whose story does not make sense and is not related to what the previous speaker has said is declared 'out'. This activity will teach students the importance of listening carefully as well as how to summarize and correctly interpret what is being said.

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