

ACTIVE LISTENING

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER



Do you find it difficult to find out what your child has done at school? Or to know how their day has been or how they feel? When we are busy or having a bad day ourselves, it is can be easy to not actually listen to what our children

say. Active listening is an invaluable skill for parents/carers as it helps to improve your communication with your child. It lets your child know you are interested in what s/he has to say.

How can you improve active listening at home?

1. Show them undivided attention

- Choose a good time for both of you - this may not be the moment they exit the school gates, but on the walk home or at the dinner table.
- Show your child you want to listen to them. Stop what you're doing, crouch down to their level and make eye contact.
- Remove all distractions like phones or toys.
- You can use brief affirmations like 'I see' to show you are listening.

2. Avoid interrupting

- Let them finish sentences at their own pace: it may be hard for them to find the right words. Try to be patient.
- Try to avoid re-asking the question in a different way if they haven't replied straight away, they may be taking a little longer to process and think about what you have asked.

3. Repeat what you've heard

- Once your child has finished speaking, say can say what you've understood. You don't need to use their exact words: you can add details and suggest an emotion they may be feeling.
- If you're not clear whether your child is sad, angry or scared, it's okay to guess with 'I wonder if...'. They may not know the right word, but you'll be able to work it out together.

4. Think about the type of question and model answers yourself

- Consider how you word the question to make it easier for the child to give an answer e.g. 'What were your two favourite things today? You can help by giving a model answer yourself so that the child can form their answer.

The benefits:

- Children are more likely to talk about their hopes and problems when they are older.
- It helps children to feel heard, valued and understood.
- It helps children learn the skill too, which they can then take this into the playground or classroom and show good listening skills.

