

Effective listening

The purpose of this exercise is to teach students how to listen effectively while others speak. It includes an element of surprise, which will force students to be alert and pay attention.

Prior to this exercise, the concept of active listening should be explained. Students may regard listening as a self-evident skill but in reality it is one of the most difficult aspects of effective communication.

Requirements

- Approx. 30 minutes.
- Possibility to arrange seats in a circle.

Schedule

1. Ask students to sit quite close together in a circle.
2. Select one student to start the exercise. Give him/her a topic to talk about. Choose the topic carefully; students must have more than 2-3 sentences to say about the issue. Possible topics could be:

- How can individual people tackle climate change?
- Why are public green areas in cities important?
- Can we permit tourism in protected areas?

3. After a while, stop the speaker when there is a pause. Ask the person sitting next to first speaker to continue from where the first person left off by repeating the last sentence and adding to the same.
4. As this pattern sets in place, suddenly switch the technique and ask a random person in the circle to continue instead of going on in sequence. This will force the group to pay attention because it could be any one's turn next. Students will have to stop rehearsing about what they are going to say and truly listen what the others are saying.
5. After everyone has had a chance to speak, have an ending discussion about pitfalls of listening, e.g. daydreaming, rehearsing (developing own response while listening), selective listening, using discouraging body language etc.