

Listening Age 12 Summary

Why Listening?

Your child's/teen's success depends upon their ability to listen and understand what you and others are communicating. Listening skills can support your child's/teen's ability to engage in healthy relationships, focus, and learn.

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

Tip: Intentional communication and healthy parenting relationships will support these steps.

STEP

1



Get Your Child/Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- *"What does it mean to listen to someone truly?"*
- *"How do you know that the person truly listens to you?"*
- *"How do you show that you are truly listening?"*
- *"What are ways to convey that you are listening to someone?"*
- *"How do you feel when someone doesn't listen to you?"*

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

- Model listening while interacting with your child/teen. Notice your body language. Ask: *"How am I demonstrating that I'm listening? What am I doing that I want my child/teen to do?"*
- Listen for thought and feeling. In addition to listening to the content of what your child/teen says, also see if you can identify the unspoken thoughts and feelings behind the content.

- Learn listening strategies together by trying them out.
 - Get curious. Don't stop asking questions when you get one-word answers. Try: *"Say more, what was fine about it?"* or *"What was difficult about today?"* or *"What went well?"* or *"Let's start at the beginning,"* or *"What made you laugh today?"* Don't give up!
 - Find opportunities to share. Model what it is like to share about your day. If your child/teen asks you how your day was, do not respond with a superficial or one-word answer. Engage them about a conflict you had or a struggle you faced. See if they can help offer suggestions.
 - 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 your listening accuracy and confirm that you have heard them (*"I heard you say that..."*).
 - Seek clarification. If you are listening to learn something from the speaker, seeking clarification on details is essential to ensure you understand. *"What did you mean when you said you were upset at school? 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/teen: *"Mrs. Smith started a new writing project today. We get to write an essay on any topic we are interested in. I can't wait."* You: *"Sounds like you are excited about this project. That's great! What thoughts have you had about what topic you will choose?"*

Tip: As your child/teen ages, it can be challenging to entice them into meaningful conversations. "Fine" might be all you get in response to *"How was your day?"* So, turn down the car radio. Hang around them without your phone. Offer plenty of chances to listen when they are ready to talk.

STEP
3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use "Show me..." statements and ask them to demonstrate listening. For example, you could say, *"Show me a few different ways you can convey that you are listening as we talk about our day."*
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements: *"I notice how you listened fully to your sister and didn't interrupt her. That's so helpful to her."*
- Offer practice by using riddles, discussing song lyrics/short clips, and playing Twenty Questions.
- Read together. When you read stories together, you engage in a listening activity that can be deeply connecting for both of you.

**STEP
4**

Support Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions to assess your child's/teen's listening skills. *"I notice that you are having difficulty listening to me as I tell you about my day. What do you think is going on for you?"* or *"What are things you might need to do or say to yourself to help yourself listen?"*
- Learn about your child's/teen's development. Each new age will present different social challenges.
- Stay engaged. Working together on ideas for new and different listening strategies can offer additional support and motivation for your child/teen when challenging issues arise.
- Engage in further practice. Create more opportunities to practice when all is calm.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap: When your child/teen does not listen to you or focuses elsewhere, you might be tempted to scold or constantly repeat yourself but give them additional chances. Everyone needs more focus sometimes. Seek clarification on what they heard and did not hear, and then review what you said again to help them refocus their attention.

**STEP
5**

Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. *"I noticed you not only listened to your sister, but you conveyed to her what you understood about what she said. I know that makes her feel cared about. That's so important."*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Find small ways your child/teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs and quality time together to show appreciation for one another.

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