

Created by **ZING365**
Learning without limits



Listening and Questioning Skills

Delegate
Notes

Name:

Date:

What will you learn?



Listening skills and how to demonstrate active listening during conversations



Understanding different questioning techniques



Using questions to fact find and find opportunities - probing



Using questions to build rapport



Using questions to gain commitment



How to use SPIN questioning effectively



Activity: Personal learning objectives

What do you hope to learn today? Please record below:

What is Active Listening?

Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain.

HEARING

is not the same as

LISTENING

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

Reading Cues

Active listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?
- Does their body language indicate that they are uncomfortable or feeling like their message is not being heard?

Active listeners watch for these cues and adjust their approach accordingly. Sometimes just taking one step back, or ceasing talking and getting the other person to talk to you instead, will be all it takes to ease the tension.

Demonstrating Active Listening

Interest

- **You show interest in your verbal and non-verbal behaviour, when a person is talking:**
 - Verbal can be exemplified by regular 'mmm's', 'yes' or 'I see' during their speech
 - Non-verbal by facing the person, open armed etc.

Summarising or paraphrasing

- Summarise back the points to the person to clarify that you have got the main purpose of the message

Tone of voice

- The voice should be reasonably pitched and varied for interest when responding

Maintain eye contact

- Stop what you are doing and ensure you give your undivided attention

Take notes

- Take notes of what was said/agreed, so that you don't miss/forget anything

Paraphrasing Techniques

What is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing techniques can help you ensure that you're getting the speaker's message accurately and completely. Paraphrasing can also help build the relationship, since it shows the sender that you are trying to understand what they are saying.

Paraphrasing is not:

- Repeating everything that person has said
- Acting like a parrot and repeating everything verbatim
- An opportunity to express judgment (by speaking in a sarcastic tone, for example)

To paraphrase well, you should:

- Paraphrase only when you need clarification or confirmation
- Put the statement in your own words, rather than using the speaker's words
- Use introductory statements like, "Do you mean..." or, "What I'm hearing is..."
- Refrain from making judgments, injecting your own thoughts, and offering your opinion

Echoing Techniques

Another excellent technique is echoing, also known as reflective or mirroring questions. With this technique, you choose a word (or several words) from the person's statement and repeat it.

You can also use stems like:

Really?

Is it/are they?

About?

What did he do?

Identifying Good Listeners



Write down the names of three people that you consider good listeners.



Do any of the three people fit into one of these categories?

Name of Person	Someone That You Like	Someone That You Admire	Someone That You Respect

Tips for Becoming a Better Listener



Review the list of listening tips below. Then, rank the list from one to seven, with one representing the least useful tip and seven representing the most useful tip.

Active Listening Tips	Ranking
Make a decision to listen. Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.	
Don't interrupt people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.	
Keep your eyes focused on the speaker and your ears tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.	
Carry a notebook or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise eight to ten times, you will be able to see at what level your listening skills are.	
Don't be afraid to ask the other person what they want from the conversation. Are they looking for advice, validation, an opinion, or just an opportunity to vent? Knowing what they want will help you structure your listening approach to effectively communicate with them.	
Ask a few questions throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarise and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.	
When you demonstrate good listening skills, that can be infectious. If you want others to communicate well, you have to set a high example.	

Asking Questions

Active listening is a two-way communication process. Knowing what questions to ask, and how to ask them, is an essential skill for anyone.

'Closed' questions can be answered with a single word or two or a simple yes or no. They can begin the closing process in a conversation, or provide confirmation of a detail, but they don't usually lead to gathering more information.

Where most people need more practice, is asking the 'Open' question, where the listener is given a chance to explain, describe how they feel about an issue, or offer suggestions.

Open questions give us more information because:

- They encourage other people to talk
- We get opinions and ideas from others
- They can help us determine if people have interpreted what we say correctly
- They can help us arrive at consensus much more readily

Open questions typically begin with a variation of the five W's (who, what, when, where, why) or ask how. Good 'Open' questions include:

- What is your opinion?
- How do you think we should solve the problem?
- What would you do in my shoes?
- Tell me more about...
- **Note:** Be very careful about too many "why" questions. All too often these questions sound like accusations, and the listener immediately becomes defensive.

Some other good 'Open' questions can include:

- What happened next?
- What do you think we can do about this?
- What can I do to help you?
- Supposing we were to...?
- Can you help me understand where you're coming from?

There are also some non-questions that can be very effective:

- Explain to me how that works...
- Describe to me how you feel...

Probing Techniques

Many people are better at presenting their own point of view than they are at drawing out information from others. Probing techniques can help you draw out information from the individual and help you understand their side of the conversation.

One of the most common ways of probing is to ask good open question, such as:

Describe that more clearly?

Would you give me a specific example of what you mean?

What do you think we should do?

The difficulty here is that if you ask too many of these probing questions, the other person begins to feel like they are under interrogation. Be thoughtful about what and how you ask. Consider how many probes you really need to offer.

A second, very effective way of probing is a pause. **Stop talking.** Let the other person fill the silence.

A third way is to ask a **reflective, echoing, or mirroring question.**

For example, let's say the person has just said, "What I really want is better benefits with my policy." You may respond by just reflecting back to them, "Better?" The reflective question usually provides you with an expanded answer without you needing to ask more questions. Of course, it is best used in conjunction with a pause.

The last method, most often used once commitment has been gained, is the **summary question** where you **check** understanding.

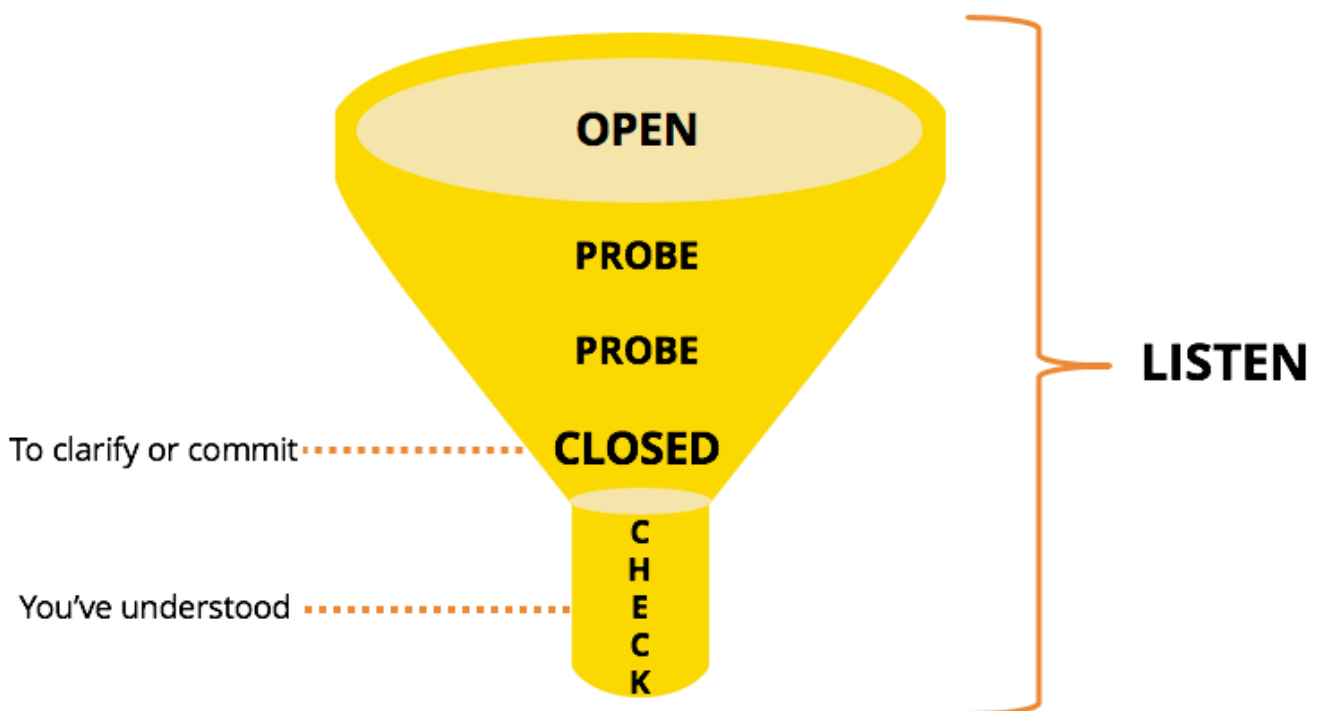
Example:

"You have been thinking about changing insurance provider, you have talked with your business partner about switching, and you have started to look at the options in front of you. That's as far as you've got, and you want me to explain how we can help? Have I got it right?"

Whatever probing technique you choose to use, you should introduce them throughout the sales conversation or funnel.

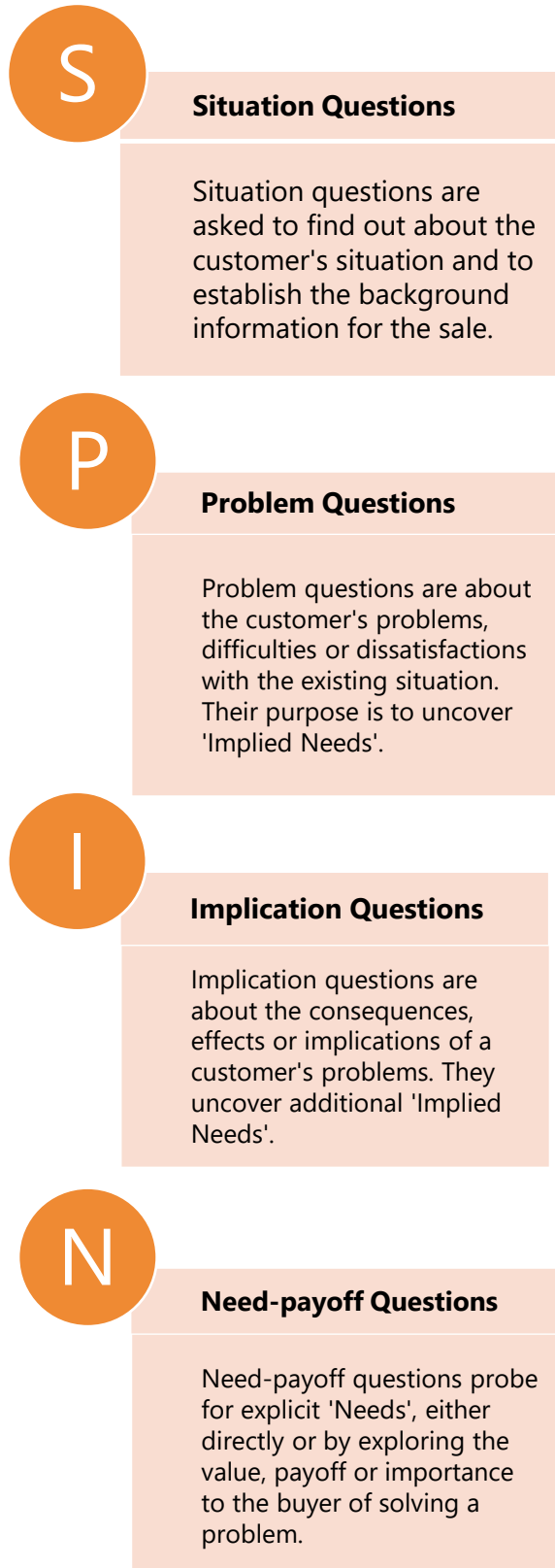
Use the summary question at the end of the questioning funnel when commitment has been achieved.

Questioning funnel



SPIN Questioning

An understanding of 'Open' and 'Closed' questions is essential, and they should be used together with the following questioning technique.



SPIN Examples

Situation *Tell me a bit more about your business?*

Problem *What are the major issues you have with your existing provider?*

Implication *When was the last time you benchmarked against your current provider?*

Need-payoff *In other words, if we came up with a solution to address some of those concerns, you'd be interested, wouldn't you?*



Working in pairs think about a new business call and complete the following:

Situation Question	Possible Customer Response	Problem Question
Implied Question	Possible Customer Response	Need-payoff Question

Notes / Personal Action Plan

Use the space below to record any notes and/or actions you plan to take after this BOOST session.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin orange border and rounded top-right corners, intended for taking notes or creating a personal action plan.