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# How to Listen Properly and Remember What You Hear

**KS3** Ages 11-14 🕒 3 min read

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## What is Active Listening?

Most people hear things all day long, but **listening** is different from hearing. Hearing happens automatically—your ears pick up sounds. **Listening** means you're paying close attention and actually trying to understand what someone is saying.

**Active listening** means you show the speaker you care about what they're saying. You look at them, nod, and maybe ask questions. When you listen actively, your brain focuses better, which helps you remember more later.

Think of it like the difference between watching TV with the sound on while scrolling on your phone (hearing) versus watching your favourite show with the phone away and full concentration (listening).

## How Your Brain Remembers What It Hears

Your **brain** stores information in three types of memory: **sensory memory** (what you notice immediately), **short-term memory** (information you hold for a few seconds), and **long-term memory** (things you remember for days or years).

When you listen properly, you help information move from short-term memory into long-term memory. This process is called **encoding**.

## Top Tips for Better Listening and Memory

**1. Remove distractions:** Put your phone away, close other tabs on your computer, and find a quiet space. Your brain can only focus on one difficult thing at a time.

**2. Take notes:** Writing down key points forces your brain to process the information twice—once when you hear it, and again when you write it down. This makes memories much stronger.

Think of it like taking a photo of something important—you're creating a copy you can look back at anytime.

- 3. Ask questions:** When something isn't clear, ask the speaker to explain it differently. Questions help you understand deeper and fix any confusion immediately.
- 4. Repeat it back:** Summarise what you heard in your own words. This confirms you understood correctly and helps cement it in your memory.
- 5. Connect to what you know:** Link new information to things you already understand. Your brain remembers better when new ideas connect to old ones.
- 6. Practise soon after:** Review your notes or think about what you learned within **24 hours**. Research shows this dramatically improves how long you remember things.

## Why It Matters

Good listening and memory skills help you succeed in school, build better friendships, and understand the world around you. The good news? These skills improve with practice, so start today!