

# Listening for Understanding

## Facilitation Guide



Tool for  
**Civic Character**

 **20 minutes**

 **Educator-prep  
Lifelong Learners**

### Materials

- A partner
- Simple line drawings
- Drawing Paper
- 2 Pencils
- 2 Clipboards or hard surface to draw on
- Patience
- A sense of humor

### About this Guide

A structured listening activity that depends on clear communication between speaker and listener to produce a visual representation that determines how well each person was able to communicate and understand one another.

Active listening is essential to the practice of principled innovation. It helps us to better understand different perspectives and to authentically connect with others.

The practice of active listening creates conditions for people to feel understood, valued, and comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas.

This technique can improve clarity and understanding, and help us to navigate conflict. Active listening helps to improve communication and develop authentic and more satisfying relationships.

Practicing active listening with a trusted friend or colleague is one way to prepare yourself to listen, connect, and practice empathy with others in your life, such as students and coworkers.

### Making Connections

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

Connecting Character Assets:

[Perspective taking](#)  
[Inclusivity](#)

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### Instructions

#### 1 Determine your roles

Decide with your partner who will be the first “listener” and who will be the first “describer”.

#### 2 Gather Supplies

The listener will need the paper, pencil, and a hard surface on which to draw. The describer will select a picture without showing it to the listener.

#### 3 Keep it hidden

If you're in-person, sit back-to-back for this activity so that the person drawing cannot see the picture, and the person describing cannot see the progress of the drawing. This can also be done as an online activity using Zoom or other platforms by using just the audio and turning off the video.

#### 4 Focus on the goal

The describer's job is to use clear, descriptive language to explain the picture to the listener. The listener's goal is to draw the picture as closely as possible to the original - without seeing the picture - guided only by the describer's words.

#### 5 Clarify

The listener can ask clarifying questions to better understand the picture. The describer's job is to be as clear as possible in their description of the picture. The describer might need to say things multiple times in different ways for the listener to understand.

#### 6 Switch roles

Give yourselves 10 minutes to get through the first exercise, then switch roles. Remember, this activity is about listening, communicating and working collaboratively to create the end picture. It's not about the drawing, instead it's about how you work together to get to the end product.