

# Active listening

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to highlight that a key part of the communication process is to be able to actively listen rather than just hear. Many misunderstandings that occur can be directly attributed to the fact that people simply did not listen to what was being said. This activity aims to show that all of us do not listen as well as we can.

## Timings

10 minutes (although this can be increased in necessary).

## Instructions

- Ask delegates to rate their listening skills. Make it a bit of fun by drawing four columns on a flipchart headed excellent/ very good/ good /average and ask delegates to select one column that best reflects their current ability.
- Inform delegates that you will be reading aloud a series of numbers. Their task is to listen and add them up in their head without making any notes.
- After the last number is read out they must record the total figure on a piece of paper.
- Read out the numbers at a moderate pace.
- Ask delegates to highlight the final figure they have arrived at. (This should be 4100). If you want, make reference back to the delegate flipchart ratings.
- Don't be surprised when many people get 5000 as the answer. One of the reasons for this is because, since people can see a pattern emerging, they stop listening fully and start making assumptions and/or second guessing what the next numbers may be.
- Start a discussion as to why some people arrived at the wrong answer. Use the discussion points to help you.

## Discussion points

- How easily did delegates complete this task?
- How many assumptions were made as the numbers were being read aloud?
- How focused on what was being said were the delegates?
- How often does this type of situation happen in their working environment?
- How can delegates improve their listening skills?
- What have delegates learnt from this activity?



Explain that another reason for many people arriving at 5000 as the answer is that when the human brain starts to see a pattern forming, which in this case was numbers of 1000 the subconscious brain can sometimes override our normal thoughts and make us follow its direction. When the last figure of 10 was read out, many people will inadvertently add up in 1000s instead of 10s.

**Trainers Brief****Active Listening Skills Text****Trainer Only.**

As I read out these numbers please add them up and then record the final answer on a piece of paper.

- You start with the figure 1,000
- add 10 – what do you get? - (1010)
- add 1,000 – what do you get? - (2010)
- add 30 – what do you get? - (2040)
- add 1,000 – what do you get? - (3040)
- add 50 – what do you get? - (3090)
- add 1,000 – what do you get? - (4090)
- add 10 – write down the final answer. – (4100)