

# Silent Listening With a Partner

## Summary

This activity challenges students to practice listening to understand – not simply to respond. It also gives students the chance to share without fear of being interrupted. It isolates the practice of listening to understand and speaking to be understood.

## Outcomes

Students will:

- Share personally with a partner, and learn something new about their partner
- Practice listening to understand and not to respond

## Details

<b>For Who?</b>	Any age, any experience level with constructive dialogue
<b>How Long?</b>	30 minutes
<b>Supplies Needed</b>	None

## Suggested Language for Instructor Framing

*“Listening is foundational to productive and meaningful dialogue experiences. Like anything else, deep listening requires practice.”*

## Detailed Agenda

### **1** Set the Stage

Tell students that they will be split into pairs. When they are grouped, here are their instructions:

- Establish who is “Person 1” and who is “Person 2.”
- Person 1: Share your answer to the prompt for 2 minutes.
- Person 2: Just listen – do not respond, add anything, or ask questions. You can nod or react silently if you like, but it is important that you stay silent.
- After the 2 minutes are up, Person 2 asks follow-up questions of curiosity to Person 1.

### Examples of Follow-Up Questions of Curiosity

- What makes you say that?
  - Why is that important to you?
  - How do you know?
  - Can you say more about what you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Why do you think that is?
  - Have you always felt that way?
  - Say more about that.
- Then, the pairs switch, and it is Person 2’s turn to just speak and Person 1’s turn to just listen.

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### Introduce the Speaking Prompt

There are many prompts that could work well in this activity. Here are a list of options to choose from, depending on the group’s age, level of familiarity with dialogue, and the classroom topic at hand.

### Prompt Options for Silent Listening With a Partner

- Share about a value, issue, or belief that is important to you. How did you come to feel so strongly about it? Where did you learn it? Has it ever been challenged or questioned? What happened?
- Share about a time you changed your mind or thinking about something. What happened to change it? What was that like?

- Share about a time you overcame a challenge in your life. What was the challenge, and how did you overcome it? What did you learn from that experience?

### 3 Think Silently Before Starting

After offering the prompt, allow students 1-2 minutes to think about how they might respond. They can do this through writing or thinking silently to themselves.

Remind students that they don't need to have a polished full response in order to start – sometimes this activity allows for a stream of consciousness to fill the 2 minutes, and that is okay, too.

## Wrap-up

### Debrief Questions

Ask students to share their reflections in the full group or in smaller groups.

- What did it feel like to *just* speak?
- What did it feel like to *just* listen?
- How did you know you were being listened to?
- What does this tell you about listening?
- What does this tell you about sharing?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Did the allotted time feel short or long?