Oral Communication Skills

Oral communication involves both listening and speaking skills.

You might think that there is no skill involved in listening, but in fact, listening is a skill that, like any other, needs to be developed. To actively listen you need to hear what the other person is saying, understand what they are talking about, and respond by reacting either verbally or non-verbally.

### Tips for Being a Good Listener:

* Give your full attention to the person you are listening to. Try to concentrate on what they are saying and don't let your mind wander.
* Allow the speaker to finish before you respond.
* Listen for the main ideas or major points the speaker is trying to make and don't be afraid to ask questions if you are not sure what they are trying to communicate.
* Respond with either verbal feedback or through your body language. Remember that there are non-verbal cues (like nodding, smiling etc.) that indicate that you are actively listening.

# Practice Activity #1

Listening actively allows you to pick up on verbal cues and make inferences about the person speaking and the subject matter. Practice your active listening skills by listening to the story:

[Kids get their kicks at soccer](https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1469773551)

Examine the verbal cues in the story:

**Tone-**The tone of the clip is positive because the kids love playing soccer and are happy to talk about it.

**Vocabulary-**One vocabulary word that stood out to me was when the interview said "cats" when talking about other kids. The use of that word made it obvious that he was interviewing a younger person, not an adult.

**Intonation (rise and fall of voice)-**The interviewer's intonation goes up at the end of most sentences, emphasizing the important parts of the story, and the positive spin.

**Background Sounds-**The background sounds were laughing and cheering and they help the listener to understand that the story is positive and that soccer is a popular sport for kids.

**Perspective-**One perspective that was offered was the perspective of kids who play soccer. Hearing their perspective helped to reinforce the ideas that soccer is fun to play.

# Practice Activity #2

Now that you have practiced your active listening skills, think about how you would use verbal cues if you were a reporter for CBC. Read the news story below. What verbal cues could you use to emphasize parts of the news story?

*Hello, I am Bob Bellows with CBC news radio and tonight's story is about the environment.* ***(pause after the introduction to catch the listener’s attention)***

*Canada's climate is quickly changing and Canadians are responsible* ***(serious tone)****. It is important to understand the affect that climate change will have on us. Temperatures are increasingly rising and so too are energy costs because with heat comes the need to air condition our cars and homes* ***(what kind of background sounds could be used here?)****. The increased temperature causes the need to use more water which is rapidly depleting our fresh water lakes. Researchers say that if temperatures continue to rise our way of life will be affected. It will soon become too hot to be active outside and we will be forced to spend more time inside on beautiful summer days.*

*Environmentalists are saying that it is not too late to make changes!* ***(positive tone)*** *Canadians can do a few very simple things to reverse the affect of climate change. We can try to decrease the amount of harmful carbons we are emitting by doing things like turning off our car engines rather than idling. We can try to reuse and recycle (use vocabulary words that people understand) more to prevent material from going into landfills, and we can be more aware of what we put down our drains to prevent harmful things like motor oil from going into our sewer system and then into our lakes.*

*For more information on how you can help to save our environment, go to our website www.CBC.ca/savetheenvironment.* ***(say slowly)***

Over to you Joan . . .

# Assignment

As a CBC radio announcer, you now need to practice preparing to read the news on the radio. Before you will actually read it, you need to read the story and make decisions about what verbal cues you will use to emphasize the important information and capture the attention of your listeners.

*Hello, I am Jennifer Patrick/ John Patrick with CBC news radio and tonight’s story is about the dangers of drinking and driving.*

*Drinking and driving is one of the number one killers of Canadians. It has shattered the lives of millions of families across the nation. Not only do people have their licenses suspended but more devastating, people have been injured or killed because of it.*

*Police are cracking down on offenders and have started a number of initiatives to catch those who commit this senseless crime. R.I.D.E. programs, (where police create roadblocks to check for people drinking and driving) are no longer being set up just during the holidays, but on a more regular basis. Police are also going into schools to talk to youth about the dangers involved. They are also working with local activists to circulate literature about the consequences and to educate people about what to do to prevent family and friends from drinking and driving.*

*For more information contact your local police station, or go to www.stopdrinkinganddriving.ca*

*This is Jennifer Patrick/ John Patrick reporting for CBC news radio.*