

Responsive Mini-Lessons: Listening—Not Descriptive

About Responsive Mini-Lessons

Responsive Mini-Lessons (RMLs) provide short, targeted lessons that are responsive to each class's facility with oral argumentation, as assessed with the DiALoG Tool. The DiALoG Tool has eight components. Four are intrapersonal—claims, evidence, reasoning, and relevance; four are interpersonal—listening, co-constructing, critiquing, and regulation. RMLs are aimed at providing more practice with one of the eight components of the DiALoG Tool, so your students are more able to work together to enact rich, thoughtful, and engaging oral argumentation. For each component, the following phrases can be assigned, via the DiALoG Tool, to describe your students' abilities: Not Descriptive, Somewhat Descriptive, or Very Descriptive. An assigned phrase of Not Descriptive or Somewhat Descriptive indicates that your students likely need more support with that particular component of oral argumentation; a lesson is then suggested to help your students strengthen their abilities in that area. If the Not Descriptive phrase is assigned, the lesson provides basic, introductory support; if the Somewhat Descriptive phrase is assigned, the lesson assumes some basic facility with that component and provides an opportunity to practice it with more focus.

For the Listening RMLs, the Not Descriptive lesson asks students to analyze a discussion to identify examples of listening behavior and behavior when people do not appear to be listening. The Somewhat Descriptive lesson builds on this by engaging students in an argumentation task that requires active listening.

Does a Responsive Mini-Lesson for the Not Descriptive Level Make Sense for Your Class?

The suggestion to provide a Responsive Mini-Lesson for the Not Descriptive level indicates that, based on your use of the DiALoG Tool, the following statement best describes your students' use of listening during oral argumentation: *Students do not acknowledge one another's ideas, do not ask one another to clarify/elaborate their positions, and do not show respectful "listening" body language.* For more detail about this level and how it compares to other levels, please see the DiALoG Tool User Guide.

There is one Responsive Mini-Lesson provided for the Not Descriptive level.

Goal

- Help students identify what it looks like, feels like, and sounds like to listen to one another during a discussion.

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Materials and Teaching Considerations

For the class

- Copymaster: Script A
- Copymaster: Script B
- 2 sheets of chart paper*
- marker*
- masking tape*

*teacher provided

Time frame: 20–30 minutes

Teaching Considerations

Most lessons will begin with an introduction followed by the lesson itself. The introduction is a brief activity that sets up and supports the lesson that follows. Each introduction is teacher-led, while the lesson that follows is more student-centered.

Getting Ready

- 1. Create T-chart.** Make a simple T-chart. As the heading for the left column, write “Signs of Not Listening”; as the heading for the right column, write “Signs of Listening.” You will record students’ responses on this T-chart as they discuss listening behaviors exhibited after students act out Script A and Script B. (In the lesson, a few possible responses for each script are listed in blue type in brackets.)
- 2. Make copies of Script A and Script B.** Make two copies of each script.
- 3. Prepare a separate area for students to act out the two scripts.** You may want to provide two chairs for this activity. When students are seated in chairs and can face each other or turn away from each other, it can make it easier to show the kinds of poor listening and good listening provided in these scripts.
 - If you feel that students may have trouble with the activities when done independently, you may choose to play one of the roles for each script and have a student act out each script with you.

- 4. Create Guidelines for Listening.** At the top of a sheet of chart paper, write “Guidelines for Listening.” Once you have recorded students’ responses in the “Signs of Listening” column of the T-chart, you will record those responses on this class list.

Introduction

- 1. Explain the importance of listening during science discussions.** Remind students that group discussions (e.g., Science Seminars) are meant to provide time for each student to both express her ideas and thinking and to listen to the thinking and ideas of others. Remind students that an important practice of science is sharing thinking about claims and evidence. When this is done, the best ideas can be found through the “group brain,” and everyone learns more than if each student was just thinking in isolation.
- 2. Explain that there are ways to know that listening is happening.** Acknowledge that listening can be difficult and that students must actively choose to listen to do it well. Explain that there are signs, both physical and oral, that students can look for that show that someone is listening.

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Lesson

- 1. Explain the activity.** Let students know that you are going to need four volunteers to act out two different scripts—two volunteers for each script. When each script is acted out, volunteers will demonstrate different ways to show that they are listening or not listening. After each script is acted out, the whole class will discuss what they saw and heard.
- 2. Ask for four volunteers.** Give two students copies of Script A and two students copies of Script B. Have each pair go to a separate quiet area to read over their scripts and prepare. Make sure that all four students understand what they will be doing.
 - Emphasize the importance of first reading the Setting and Introduction section, which describes the physical behaviors they need to exhibit during their performances.
 - Point out that it's important to follow the directions in the Setting and Introduction section as well as the directions in the actual script so they can demonstrate certain listening behaviors to their peers.
- 3. Prepare the rest of the class for the activity.** As the four volunteers study their scripts, have the remaining students raise their hands and share about someone they know who listens well to them when they talk and how they know this person is listening.
- 4. Set the scene for Script A.** Explain to the class that two students will act out a scene in which they will attempt to discuss evidence about whether an organism does or does not live in the forest. Have the class pay attention to signs of listening as they watch their peers act out the scene.
- 5. Introduce Students 1 and 2 and have them act out Script A.** Introduce the two volunteers who will present Script A as Student 1 and Student 2 and have them come to the front of the room and act out their parts. (Alternatively, you may choose to do Script B first.)
- 6. Introduce T-chart.** Let students know that as they analyze the examples of listening from Script A, you will record their comments on this chart.
- 7. Analyze examples of listening from Script A with the entire class.** Ask students to explain whether or not Student 2 was doing a good job or a poor job of listening and to explain how they know. Encourage students to point out physical and oral indicators of not listening. As students comment, add ideas to the “Signs of Not Listening” column of the T-chart. **[Student 2 was turned away, looking at the ground and not at Student 1 when Student 1 was talking. Student 2 did not respond to the topic that Student 1 was discussing. Instead, Student 2 introduced a new topic.]**
- 8. Set the scene for Script B.** Explain that this pair will also act out a scene in which they attempt to discuss evidence about whether an organism does or does not live in the forest. Once again, have students pay attention to signs of listening as they watch their peers act out the scene.
- 9. Introduce Students 3 and 4 and have them act out Script B.** Introduce the two volunteers who will present Script B as Student 3 and Student 4 and have them come to the front of the room and act out their parts.

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10. Analyze examples of listening from Script

B with the entire class. Ask students to explain whether or not Students 3 and 4 were doing a good job or a poor job of listening and to explain how they know. Encourage students to point out physical and oral indicators of not listening. As students comment, add ideas to the “Signs of Listening” column of the T-Chart. **[Both students had their bodies turned toward each other the entire time when the other was speaking. Both students looked each other in the eyes and seemed focused. Student 3 acknowledged what Student 4 said and responded by discussing what Student 4 said before moving on to a new idea.]**

- 11. Introduce Guidelines for Listening.** Explain that you will use this whole-class experience of analyzing the examples of listening and not listening to create a set of guidelines for what the signs of listening feel like, look like, and sound like. Students will then be able to refer to these guidelines when participating in activities in which listening is needed. Work with your class to come up with a short, concise list, using the responses you recorded in the “Signs of Listening” column of the T-Chart as a starting point.

Why This Mini-Lesson Matters

This mini-lesson focuses on engaging students in analyzing examples of active listening. It makes explicit the purpose and specific behaviors associated with active listening. Students are often not aware of or do not understand the norms of discussion, including norms of listening (Herrenkohl 1999) that are involved in scientific argumentation. Providing clear guidance through discussing examples of verbal and physical behaviors of listening and markers of not listening, as well as generating a class set of listening guidelines, helps students understand and appropriate new discussion norms.

Resources

Herrenkohl, L. R., Palincsar, A. S., DeWater, L. S., and Kawasaki, K. (1999). Developing scientific communities in classrooms: A sociocognitive approach. *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 8(3-4): 451–493.



The Learning
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Script A

Setting and Introduction

Two students are working together to discuss evidence (on imaginary evidence cards) about whether an organism does or does not live in the forest. Student 1 is trying to explain some thinking about this problem, and Student 2 is showing that he/she is not listening carefully. As Student 1 is talking, Student 2 should turn away from Student 1, looking around the room and showing with his/her body that Student 1 is not getting the full attention she/he should be getting.

Student 1: So, one claim is that this animal does live in the forest. But, what I think is happening is that this animal doesn't actually live in this environment. The evidence shows that this animal eats ocean animals such as crab and fish, and there are no crabs or fish in this forest. What do you think?

Student 2 (looking around the room, not paying attention): Hmmmm . . . What? Oh, I'm not sure.

Student 1: Well, we have to figure out which claim is stronger. When I look at this other evidence card, I observe that the animal also has front feet that look like the feet of a sea lion. I just am not sure, but maybe the animal got dropped in the forest somehow?

Student 2 (still looking around the room or down at the ground): The forest is a good place for animals to live.

Student 1: Oh, so you think maybe the animal does live in the forest?

Student 2 (looking at the evidence cards): I think a lot of animals live in this forest, like maybe birds and even some leopards or something cool like that! I want to see what the coolest animals are that live in the forest!

Script B

Setting and Introduction

Two students are working together to discuss evidence (on imaginary evidence cards) about whether an organism does or does not live in the forest. Student 3 and Student 4 are listening carefully to each other. Both students are looking each other in the eyes often and nodding to show that they understand what the other person is saying while they are speaking. Both students are directly facing each other and leaning forward slightly to show they are listening.

Student 3: So, one claim is that this animal does live in the forest. But, what I think is happening is that this animal doesn't actually live in this environment. The evidence shows that this animal eats ocean animals such as crab and fish, and there are no crabs or fish in this forest. What do you think?

Student 4 (facing and looking directly at Student 3, nodding while Student 3 is speaking): I see what you are saying. The food evidence about what this animal eats is strong evidence, but I don't think it could have just been dropped in the forest. I wonder if maybe it swam up the river? If you look at the map, there is a river here that goes down to the ocean.

Student 3 (also facing and looking directly at Student 4, nodding while Student 4 is speaking): Oh! Great thinking! So, maybe the animal was looking for new food that it couldn't find in the ocean for some reason. The feet of this animal show that it can swim—this evidence card shows that its feet are a lot like the feet of a sea lion, so I think it can swim.

Student 4 (continuing to show body language that goes with good listening): Yes, and this other card shows that there are fish in the river. Maybe this animal just eats fish from this river that is in the forest and doesn't have to go to the ocean at all. Maybe it just stays mostly near the river while it is living in the forest.

Student 3 (continuing to show body language that goes with good listening): That makes a lot of sense! Now let's think about how this evidence supports one of these claims.

Student 4: Okay!