

# FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

---



## AGENDA

- Starter
- Do This, Do That
- Active Versus Passive
- Instructions for What?
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will examine the importance of understanding instructions.

Students will apply active listening and reading to following instructions.

Students will practice clarifying written and verbal instructions.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Test Yourself” activity sheet for each student (Part I)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask students to imagine that they are taking a multiple-choice test. The test has a separate answer sheet for marking their answers.

Ask, “If the instructions for the test say that answers must be marked in pencil, what will happen if you use a pen or a marker?” (Students might respond: if a machine that reads only pencil marks is being used, an answer sheet filled in with pen or marker cannot be scored.) Point out that the result is the same as if the student had handed in a blank answer sheet.

Explain that it can be very disappointing not to do well on an assignment or a test, but it can be even more disappointing if the poor performance is the result of not following instructions.

Tell students that in this lesson they will examine ways to improve on following instructions.

**Part I Do This, Do That (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students examine the importance of understanding instructions.

**1. Students test their ability to follow instructions.**

Distribute copies of the “Test Yourself” activity sheet. Explain that this activity sheet will allow students to check their ability to follow instructions. Allow students three minutes to complete the activity sheet.

**2. Students evaluate their results.**

When time is up, have students exchange their activity sheets with a partner for grading. Explain that students are to give one of two grades: a 10 if the instructions were followed correctly or a zero if they were not.

After a minute, ask students to raise their hands if they gave their partner’s activity sheet a 10. Call on one of these students, and ask them to hold up the activity sheet. Ask the class if they agree with this score.

Have students evaluate their work. Ask questions such as the following:

- Should there be any other writing on the paper besides the name? (No)
- Should a corner be torn? (No)
- Should there be two holes in the paper connected by a line? (No)
- What did you need to do in order to follow the instructions correctly? (Read through all of the directions before starting to follow them.)

Through questions and comments, help students conclude that the last instruction is to ignore directions three through nine; therefore, an activity sheet with a grade of 10 should only have the person's name written on it and a crease down the center from top to bottom.

### **3. Students draw conclusions about the importance of following instructions.**

Ask volunteers to think of other examples of when it's important to read through instructions first. Point out that simply reading or listening to all instructions first can save time and eliminate the need to do all or part of a task over again. Emphasize that it's important to understand instructions in order to follow them correctly.

Have students reevaluate the grades they assigned and adjust them if necessary before returning the activity sheets to their partners.

## **Part II Active Versus Passive (5 minutes)**

Purpose: Students apply active listening and reading to help them understand and follow instructions.

### **1. Students define the concepts of active and passive listening.**

Ask students if they know the difference between active and passive listening or reading. Ask them to give examples of each.

Have students recall what they learned about active listening in lesson 2 of Module One: Communication. Through questions, comments, and prompts, help students understand the following:

- Active listening or reading is paying close attention, thinking about what we are hearing or reading, and making connections to what we are learning. We listen actively when we listen to and ask questions of our friends. We read actively when we are interested in what we are reading. We must listen and read actively when we need to know or understand something.
- Passive listening or reading is hearing or reading without paying attention, thinking, or making connections. When we listen to music, we often listen passively, especially when we are doing something else. When we read while watching television, we are reading passively.

### **2. Students apply the concepts of active listening to following instructions.**

Discuss the need to be active readers and listeners when given a set of instructions. Invite students to support their opinions with reasons.

Explain that in order to understand instructions, students must read or listen actively. Sometimes, it may be necessary for them to read instructions more than once. And it's always important for them to ask questions to clarify something they don't understand.

---

**Part III Instructions for What? (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Students practice using written and verbal instructions.

**1. Students brainstorm activities with simple instructions.**

Ask students to brainstorm a list of simple things that they know how to do or make. Explain that students will be writing instructions for these activities, so they should be activities that can be done easily.

Offer suggestions such as sewing on a button, making scrambled eggs, folding a paper airplane, playing a simple card game, tying a knot, fixing a slipped bicycle chain, riding a skateboard, or changing a lightbulb. Discuss the appropriateness of the activity in terms of ease (i.e., how easy or difficult it would be to instruct someone to perform the activity).

**2. Students write instructions.**

Tell students to choose an activity, reminding them that a simple activity will work best. Then, give students about five minutes to write down step-by-step instructions for doing the activity.

If students have chosen activities that are difficult, suggest easier ones. When most students have finished, tell them to think about whether they will give their instructions verbally or in writing.

**3. Students exchange instructions.**

Have students work with partners to give each other their instructions, without naming their activities. Remind students to listen or read actively and to ask for clarification if they need it. Set a time limit of about five minutes for this step, alerting students when it's time to change roles.

When time is up, ask for a show of hands from students who think they would be able to successfully complete the task they've learned. Invite students to name the activities they chose to teach to their partners. In order to prompt students to discuss their experiences, ask questions such as the following:

- How many of you chose to give instructions verbally? Why?
- How many of you listened to or read through all of the instructions before responding?
- Was it important to get clarification for some instructions? If so, how did you do this?
- Which was easier—to give instructions or to receive them? Why?

---

### Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students why it is important to read or listen to instructions actively rather than passively. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- It is important to understand instructions in order to follow them correctly.
- Always read or listen to instructions actively, not passively.
- If necessary, read instructions more than once and ask questions to clarify verbal instructions.

### Student Assessment

---

1. Describe the difference between passive listening/reading and active listening/reading.
2. Give an example of a time when you listened/read passively and a time when you listened/read actively.
3. List three advantages of listening/reading actively

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

---

“Speed will get you nowhere if you are headed in the wrong direction.”

Discuss this quote as it relates to academics. Have students illustrate the quote.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

---

Have students make cookies, pizza, or other simple dishes of their choosing. They must read through the directions once and be able to list the steps, verbally or in writing, before beginning. (This activity requires supervision, and presents an opportunity to involve parents.)

Have students distribute samples of their foods to the class. Discuss the process they needed to follow to make the food.

### Writing in Your Journal

---

Have students recount a time when not following instructions had negative results.

Have volunteers share their stories with the class.

### Using Technology

---

Have students visit [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com), a site that contains user-submitted instructions for a wide variety of activities.

Have students choose and follow the instructions for an activity on the site. Have them report their results to the class.

## Homework

---

Have students copy the directions for use from the back of a common household item, such as aspirin or bleach. They should include the cautions listed.

Have students share their findings in small groups, explaining why it's important to follow directions carefully in each case.

## Additional Resources

---

Have students scour the school for hidden talents. (Maybe the principal has a secret recipe for salsa.)

Have them invite these individuals to class to demonstrate their talents.

Have students create a list of instructions for the activities the guests describe. After students confirm that their instructions are correct, have them publish a class newsletter touting the undiscovered talents of the school's students and staff.

# TEST YOURSELF

1. Write your name in the top right corner of this paper.
2. Fold this paper in half the long way.
3. Unfold this paper.
4. Tear off the bottom left corner of this paper.
5. Write the word "up" to the right of this sentence.
6. Turn this paper upside down and write the word "down."
7. Draw a circle and divide it into four parts.
8. Poke two holes in the middle of this paper.
9. Draw a line to connect the holes.
10. Ignore directions 3 through 9 on this paper.