

Perspective-Taking Tips Guide

Tips for Active Listening

-  Use open-ended questions to encourage deeper responses.
-  Listen to understand, not to respond.
-  Pay attention to tone, body language, and facial expressions.

Types of Open-Ended Questions

Here are some strong examples of open-ended questions that promote deeper understanding and support perspective-taking:

General Understanding

Can you tell me more about how you're feeling?
What led you to that conclusion?
How did you come to see it that way?

Exploring Experiences

What was that experience like for you?
How did that situation affect you personally?
What were you thinking at the time?

Encouraging Reflection

What do you think might help resolve this?
How do you think others might view this situation?
What would you like to see happen next?

Clarifying Values and Beliefs

What's most important to you in this situation?
How do your values influence your perspective here?
What do you believe is the right thing to do?

Building Empathy

What do you wish others understood about your point of view?
How do you think I could better support you?

What would you want someone in my position to know?

Understanding Thought Processes

What was going through your mind when that happened?

How did you arrive at that decision?

What options did you consider before choosing that one?

Exploring Emotions

How did that make you feel?

What emotions came up for you during that experience?

What part of that situation was most difficult for you emotionally?

Navigating Conflict or Disagreement

What do you think we're missing in this conversation?

How do you see this situation differently from me?

What would a fair resolution look like to you?

Personal Background

How has your background influenced how you see this issue?

What experiences have shaped your perspective on this?

Can you share a time when you felt misunderstood?

Clarifying Goals and Needs

What are you hoping to achieve in this situation?

What do you need most from me right now?

What would success look like for you here?

Encouraging Self-Reflection

What have you learned from this experience?

If you could go back, would you do anything differently?

What advice would you give someone in a similar situation?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

While open-ended questions are powerful tools for fostering understanding and empathy, they can lose their effectiveness if not used thoughtfully. Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

Asking Leading Questions

These subtly suggest a desired answer and can bias the response.

 Mistake: Don't you think it would've been better to do it differently?

✅ Better: How do you feel about how that turned out?

❌ Combining Multiple Questions at Once

This can confuse the listener and make it hard to answer clearly.

❌ Mistake: What did you think about the meeting, and how do you think we should move forward, and what would you change?

✅ Better: What stood out to you most about the meeting?

❌ Asking Vague or Overly Broad Questions

These can be overwhelming or unclear.

❌ Mistake: What do you think about everything that happened?

✅ Better: What part of the situation was most impactful for you?

❌ Using 'Why' in a Judgmental Tone

"Why" questions can feel accusatory if not phrased with care.

❌ Mistake: Why would you do that?

✅ Better: Can you walk me through your thinking at the time?

❌ Interrupting or Rushing the Response

Even a well-phrased question loses value if the speaker isn't given time to answer fully.

❌ Mistake: Cutting off the speaker before they finish.

✅ Better: Allow time and space for full responses.

❌ Asking Questions Without Genuine Curiosity

People can sense when questions are asked out of obligation rather than interest.

❌ Mistake: Asking out of obligation or routine.

✅ Better: Ask with sincere interest in the other person's experience.

Practice Scenarios

Here are several realistic scenarios where you can practice using open-ended questions to build perspective-taking skills. These are great for role-playing, training, or self-reflection:

Site	Scenario	Prompt One	Prompt Two	Prompt Three
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Workplace	A colleague disagrees with your approach to a project.	<i>What concerns do you have about the current plan?</i>	<i>How do you envision a better outcome?</i>	<i>What's most important to you in this situation?</i>
Training/ Classroom	A participant/student seems disengaged.	<i>What's been your experience with this topic so far?</i>	<i>Is there something that would help you feel more connected to the material?</i>	<i>What's been challenging for you in this setting?</i>
Friendship	A friend is upset but hasn't shared why.	<i>Can you help me understand what's been bothering you?</i>	<i>What do you need from me right now?</i>	<i>How did that situation make you feel?</i>
Family	A family member reacts strongly to a decision you made	<i>What's your perspective on what happened?</i>	<i>How did my decision affect you?</i>	<i>What would help us move forward together?</i>
Customer Service/Client	A client is frustrated with a service or product.	<i>Can you walk me through your experience so far?</i>	<i>What were you expecting, and how did this fall short?</i>	<i>What would a good resolution look like for you?</i>
Inter-personal/ Cross-Cultural	You are discussing a sensitive issue with someone from a different background.	<i>How has your background shaped how you see this issue?</i>	<i>What do you wish more people understood about your experience?</i>	<i>What's something you think I might not be seeing clearly?</i>