ACTIVE LISTENING

Considering that it is difficult for native speakers of a language to listen actively, it isn't too surprising that this is a difficult skill to teach second-language learners. Fortunately, there are excellent listening texts on the market and many integrated texts have good listening components. Nonetheless, it is a good idea to work on this area frequently. Sentence dictations or question dictations (where students don’t write what you say but the answer) are excellent for this.

The following lesson can be used for beginning students as an introduction to active listening as well as a review of the material they have learned over the first couple of weeks in class. It could also be used as a review during the first day or two at a higher beginning level.

Use this lesson as a template for similar lessons. For example you can practice like numbers (18 and 80, 16 and 60) or new vocabulary. You can give them a paper with objects already on it (as this lesson has) or you can simply dictate, or have them dictate to each other, numbers or letters as the starting point. Of course, they can always draw objects or shapes.

The key to this or any active listening exercise is to ensure that it is a listening exercise. Too often students get frustrated or give up and look at their partner’s paper. If possible have them sit at opposite ends of a desk or put up some kind of divider. If they are really stubborn, try having them do it back to back!

For this reason, you may choose to give each student only the written instructions and not the example. If they are a trustworthy lot you can copy the example on the back of the instruction page. One caution if you do this: Make sure that they know to tell their partner to write their information on the page and not to expect them to write what is on the example, e.g., write “Anna” and not “first name.”