Active Listening challenges

Music is all around us. We hear music every day. Are we listening carefully to the sounds and singers we hear?

**Passive listening** is when you listen to music while doing other things. (Enjoying music while doing homework is passive listening) The music is in the background, so we are focused on other thoughts and activities. The fine details in the music are lost.

**Active listening is when you listen to music carefully and give it your full attention.** Listening without distraction allows the music to affect us. We can ask and answer questions about the sounds we hear. We may even discover new and exciting details in the music. Listening with intention allows us to become better singers and musicians. We become aware of the beautiful details in the music, which will inspire us to become more artistic in our performances. Here are some active listening challenges for you to try! (Earn your headphones!)

---

**ACCOMPANIMENT**

Listen carefully to the piano accompaniment of a song you are singing.

1. How many bars is the introduction?
2. Does the piano introduction play the vocal melody line?
3. Does the piano accompaniment play your melody when you are singing?
4. What dynamics do you hear within the piano accompaniment?
5. Does the piano accompaniment end before or after your singing?

**BONUS:** Can you sing the melody of the piano introduction?

---

**RHYTHM**

Listen to a selection of music focusing on these rhythm elements:

1. Can you tap a steady beat with the recording?
2. Can you tap on the beginning of each bar?
3. Are the percussion instruments playing through the entire song?
4. Does the tempo stay the same throughout the entire song?
5. What percussive instruments do you hear in this song?

**BONUS:** Can you sing the melody while tapping on beats 2 and 4?
INSTRUMENTATION

Listen to a recorded selection of music and listen for the following:

1. Can you identify the instruments used in this recording?
2. Are any instruments featured (solos) in this music?
3. Are there any sounds that are not created by an instrument?
4. Do the instruments enter in at the same time or one after another?
5. Do the instruments stop playing at any time during the song?

**BONUS:** Choose one instrument and sing the melody it plays.

VOCALS

Listen to a selection of vocal music and listen for these details in the song.

1. Does the singer start the song singing low or high notes?
2. Does the singer use words or vowel sounds (or both)
3. How does the singer use dynamics in this song?
4. Can you understand all words clearly?
5. What is unique about this singer’s vocal performance?

**BONUS:** Identify how the singer uses their voice expressively in this song.

VOCAL HARMONIES

Listen to a selection of music that has vocal harmonies.

1. Print up the lyrics and underline the lines where there are vocal harmonies.
2. Can you identify if the vocal harmonies are above or below the melody line?
3. Are the harmonies sung by male or female voices?
4. Do the harmonies use the same lyrics or vowel sounds?
5. Do the harmonies enter with the melody line or do they come after?

**BONUS:** Be the background singer! Perform a song singing only harmonies.