

# The Speaker-Listener Technique

One person speaks. The other says it back until the first person agrees it landed. Then you swap. Nobody solves anything until both people have been heard. Put this on the fridge.

## THE RULES

### Both of you

- The speaker has the floor. Pick something to hold if it helps, a remote or a mug.
- Share the floor. Turns swap. This is not an interview.
- No problem solving. Not yet. This is the rule people break first.

### If you have the floor (Speaker)

- Talk about your own experience, not what you think their motives are.
- Keep it short. If it cannot be repeated back in one go, it was too long.
- Then stop, and let them say it back before you add anything.

### If you do not (Listener)

- Say back what you heard, in your own words. Do not parrot it.
- No rebutting, no defending, no "yes but". Your turn is coming.
- You can ask a clarifying question. You cannot ask a counter-argument.

**Why the no-solving rule matters.** Jumping to a fix is what stops people feeling heard, and people who do not feel heard keep restating the problem instead of moving on. Ban it for the length of the exercise. Once you have both been heard, the practical fix is usually quick and much less contested.

# One turn, written down

Use this the first few times, until passing the floor stops feeling strange. Fill in one turn, swap, and do it again on the other side.

## Speaker

Has the floor. Speaks only for themselves, and keeps it short.

## Listener

Says it back. Does not rebut, defend, or fix.

### 1. Speaker, say one thing.

*About your experience, not their character. Short enough to be repeated back.*

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### 2. Listener, say it back in your own words.

*Go for the meaning underneath, not just the words on the surface.*

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### 3. Speaker, did that land?

- ☐ Yes, that is it. Pass the floor and swap roles.
- ☐ Not quite. Say the missing part, and the listener tries again.

### 4. Now swap, and do the same the other way.

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**Only after both of you have been heard:** talk about what to actually do. If you notice one of you drifting into fixing before that point, say "floor" out loud and go back. That is not being pedantic, it is the whole technique.