

LEARNLIFE · Listening for Trust

The Trust Pulse Survey

Three versions for primary-age children, adolescents and adults

Administrator's Guide

This document contains three age-appropriate versions of the Listening for Trust pulse survey, each grounded in the same twenty-four items across the four dimensions of relational trust identified by Bryk and Schneider (2002): respect, competence, personal regard and integrity. The three versions share identical structure and dimensional coverage, differing only in language register, response format and administration method.

Which version to use

Version A - Primary (ages 6-11). Written in simple, concrete language. Uses a five-face visual scale (from sad face to happy face). Designed to be read aloud by a facilitator, with learners responding by pointing, colouring or placing a token. Takes approximately 10-15 minutes with guided administration.

Version B - Adolescent (ages 12-17). Written in clear, direct language appropriate for secondary-age learners. Uses a standard 1-5 Likert scale with word anchors. Can be self-administered with brief introduction. Takes approximately 10-12 minutes.

Version C - Adult (ages 18+). Written in professional language suited to adult learners, including those in entrepreneurial and vocational programmes. Uses a standard 1-5 Likert scale. Fully self-administered. Takes approximately 8-10 minutes.

Frequency and timing

The full survey is recommended once per half year at a consistent point in the cycle to allow comparison over time. A Quick Pulse version (the six items marked with an asterisk) can be used every five to six weeks as a lighter check-in. Administer at the same time of day and week where possible. Avoid administering during periods of unusual stress or disruption, as the results will reflect the disruption rather than the underlying trust conditions.

Anonymity and ethics

All responses must be anonymous. No individual respondent should be identifiable from their answers, and the community must be told this explicitly before administration.

The instrument is a listening practice, not a performance measure. If it is used as a performance measure, it will stop telling the truth.

Returning results to the community

Results should be shared back with the community at a headline level within two weeks of collection. Share aggregate scores by dimension, highlight any notable shifts since the last administration, and read back a selection of anonymised qualitative responses. The community should hear what it said to itself. Without this step, the instrument loses its integrity and response rates will decline.

Cultural and contextual adaptation

The instrument is designed to be culturally nuanced and context-agnostic. Where literacy is limited, all versions can be administered orally. Where written response is impractical, use coloured tokens or hand-raising for quantitative items and spoken group responses for qualitative prompts. The open response prompts are particularly important in contexts where the quantitative items may not fully capture the community's experience.

Practitioners should feel free to adjust specific words to match local language and meaning, provided the relational dimension being measured is preserved. The core stem of each item (shown in the item bank in the Cultivating Trust Companion) is the reference point for any adaptation.

Connecting to the Trust Rituals

This survey is designed as the listening half of the Cultivating Trust Companion. Each dimension maps to specific rituals. When a dimension scores low, deepen the corresponding rituals. When a dimension scores high, the rituals are likely working - acknowledge this with the community. The connection between signal and action is detailed in the Companion document.

VERSION A: PRIMARY (AGES 6-11)

Read aloud by a facilitator. Learners respond using a five-face scale, tokens or by pointing.

How to use this version

Sit with the learners in a circle or small group. Explain that you are going to ask some questions about how this community feels to them, and that there are no right or wrong answers. Show the five faces - from very sad to very happy - and practise with a warm-up question unrelated to trust (for example: "How much do you like pizza?"). Read each question slowly and clearly. Allow time for each learner to respond before moving on. For the open questions at the end, invite spoken responses and record them yourself.

Response scale

Use five faces displayed on a large card or drawn on a board. Each learner points to, colours in or places a token on the face that matches how they feel. Where appropriate, use five coloured cards (red, orange, yellow, light green, bright green) as an alternative.

SECTION A: HOW PEOPLE TREAT EACH OTHER

Relational trust dimension: Respect

1.	Do people here treat me nicely and listen to what I say?	1	2	3	4	5	?
2.	When I share my ideas, do people really listen?	1	2	3	4	5	?
3.	If I don't agree with something, is it still okay?	1	2	3	4	5	?
4.	Do grown-ups and children here work together like a team?	1	2	3	4	5	?
5.	Does anyone notice when I'm here - and when I'm not?	1	2	3	4	5	?
6.	Does our space feel like a good place to be?	1	2	3	4	5	?

SECTION B: HOW WELL THINGS WORK HERE*Relational trust dimension: Competence*

7.	Do the grown-ups here know how to help me learn?	1	2	3	4	5	?
8.	When someone says they'll do something, do they actually do it?	1	2	3	4	5	?
9.	If something bad happens, do the adults help sort it out?	1	2	3	4	5	?
10.	Am I learning things that will really help me?	1	2	3	4	5	?
11.	Do the grown-ups say when they don't know something?	1	2	3	4	5	?
12.	Do I think this place will keep getting better?	1	2	3	4	5	?

SECTION C: HOW PEOPLE CARE FOR EACH OTHER*Relational trust dimension: Personal regard*

13.	Is there a grown-up here who really knows me - what I like, what's hard, what I'm good at?	1	2	3	4	5	?
14.	Do people here care about me, not just my work?	1	2	3	4	5	?
15.	Do people here help each other when things are hard?	1	2	3	4	5	?
16.	If I'm having a hard time, can I tell someone here?	1	2	3	4	5	?

17.	Do people here notice good things that happen to us?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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18.	If my best friend wanted to come here, would I say yes?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION D: HOW HONEST AND FAIR THINGS ARE

Relational trust dimension: Integrity

19.	When grown-ups say something is important, do they really do it?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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20.	When decisions are made, do people tell us why?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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21.	If something's wrong, do people here tell the truth about it?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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22.	If I make a mistake, do people help me learn from it - or do I get in trouble?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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23.	When people here make me a promise, do they keep it?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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24.	Do I feel safe being me here?	1	2	3	4	5	?
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YOUR WORDS

Relational trust dimension: All dimensions - facilitator records spoken responses

Read these prompts aloud. Write down what learners say, in their own words.

25.	Tell me about a time recently when you felt really trusted here.

26.	What is one thing that makes you feel safe in this community?

27.	If you could change one thing to make this community even better, what would it be?

28.	Is there anything that is making things harder for you right now that you want to share?

** Items marked with an asterisk form the Quick Pulse version (6 items) for use between full administrations.*

VERSION B: ADOLESCENT (AGES 12-17)*Self-administered with brief introduction. Standard 1-5 scale.***Instructions for participants**

This survey asks how trust feels in your community right now. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses are completely anonymous - no one will know which answers are yours. For each statement, circle the number that best matches your experience. If you are unsure or prefer not to answer a question, mark the ? column.

1 = Strongly disagree **2** = Disagree **3** = Neutral **4** = Agree **5** = Strongly agree **?** = Not sure / prefer not to say

SECTION A: RESPECT*Relational trust dimension: Respect*

1.	I feel genuinely respected by the people around me in this community.	1	2	3	4	5	?
2.	When I contribute ideas, they are genuinely considered by others.	1	2	3	4	5	?
3.	I can express disagreement without worrying it will damage my relationships here.	1	2	3	4	5	?
4.	The relationships here feel like partnerships, not like one group is above another.	1	2	3	4	5	?
5.	My presence and participation actually matter to the people in this community.	1	2	3	4	5	?
6.	The physical environment here makes me feel that the people in it are trusted and valued.	1	2	3	4	5	?

SECTION B: COMPETENCE*Relational trust dimension: Competence*

7.	The people leading this community are genuinely capable of supporting what we are doing.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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8.	When people here make commitments, they follow through reliably.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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9.	When things go wrong, the community responds with capability rather than panic or blame.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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10.	What I'm learning here genuinely matters for who I am becoming.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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11.	Leaders here are honest about what they don't yet know, rather than pretending to know everything.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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12.	I believe this community is genuinely learning and growing as a whole, not just asking us to.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION C: PERSONAL REGARD*Relational trust dimension: Personal regard*

13.	At least one person here holds a real sense of who I am and what I'm navigating.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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14.	This community sees me as a full person, not only in my role as a learner.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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15.	When it really matters, people here go beyond what's expected to support each other.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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16.	When I'm struggling, I experience this community as a source of support, not a risk.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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17.	There are real, not performative, moments of recognition in this community.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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18.	I would recommend this community to a friend or family member without hesitation.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION D: INTEGRITY

Relational trust dimension: Integrity

19.	There is genuine alignment between what this community says it stands for and how it actually operates.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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20.	Decisions here are transparent, fair and accompanied by honest explanation.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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21.	Hard conversations happen openly and with care here, rather than being avoided.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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22.	Mistakes are held as opportunities for growth, without unfair consequences.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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23.	I experience this community as reliable in honouring the commitments it makes to me.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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24.	I can bring the fullness of who I am into this community and feel welcome.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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YOUR VOICE

Relational trust dimension: All dimensions - written responses

Please write as much or as little as you want. These responses are anonymous.

25.	One moment recently when I felt genuinely trusted was...

26.	One thing that makes this community feel safe to me is...

27.	One thing that would strengthen trust in our community is...

28.	If there is anything making trust harder right now that you want to name, this is your space.

** Items marked with an asterisk form the Quick Pulse version (6 items) for use between full administrations.*

VERSION C: ADULT (AGES 18+)

Self-administered. Suited to adult learners, including entrepreneurial and vocational programmes.

Instructions for participants

This instrument is a practice of collective listening - an opportunity for this community to hear how trust is experienced by its members. Your responses are completely anonymous. For each statement, select the number that best reflects your current experience. Where you are unsure or prefer not to respond, select the ? option. The open prompts at the end are where the most important insights often emerge; please take a moment with them.

1 = Strongly disagree **2** = Disagree **3** = Neither agree nor disagree **4** = Agree **5** = Strongly agree **?** = Not sure / prefer not to say

SECTION A: RESPECT

Relational trust dimension: Respect

1.	I experience consistent respect from peers and leaders in this community.	1	2	3	4	5	?
2.	My contributions are genuinely considered, including when they challenge the prevailing view.	1	2	3	4	5	?
3.	I can express professional or substantive disagreement without experiencing social cost.	1	2	3	4	5	?
4.	Partnership rather than hierarchy is visible in how decisions are made and work is shared.	1	2	3	4	5	?
5.	My presence is recognised as a meaningful part of this community's life.	1	2	3	4	5	?

6.	The physical environment signals that those who use it are trusted and valued.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION B: COMPETENCE

Relational trust dimension: Competence

7.	The leaders of this community are genuinely capable of supporting the work we do together.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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8.	Commitments made in this community are reliably honoured.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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9.	When difficulties arise, this community responds with capability and care rather than panic or blame.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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10.	The work we do here genuinely develops capability I can use in the wider world.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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11.	Leaders model the honesty of not-yet-knowing, rather than performing false certainty.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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12.	I have confidence that this community is learning as an organisation, not just asking others to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION C: PERSONAL REGARD

Relational trust dimension: Personal regard

13.	At least one person in this community holds a genuine and informed sense of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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14.	This community cares about my flourishing as a person, not only my productivity or output.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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15.	When circumstances require it, members go beyond their formal role to support each other.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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16.	When I am struggling, I experience this community as a resource rather than a risk.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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17.	Moments of meaningful recognition are present - not staged, but genuine.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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18.	I would, without reservation, recommend this community to someone I care about.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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SECTION D: INTEGRITY

Relational trust dimension: Integrity

19.	I experience genuine alignment between this community's stated values and its lived practice.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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20.	Decision-making processes in this community are transparent, fair and honestly explained.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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21.	Difficult truths are spoken kindly and openly, rather than being deferred or hidden.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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22.	This community holds mistakes as opportunities for growth, without fear of unfair consequence.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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23.	This community reliably honours the commitments it makes to me and to others.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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24.	I can bring the fullness of who I am into this community and experience it as welcome.	1	2	3	4	5	?
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OPEN REFLECTION*Relational trust dimension: All dimensions - written responses*

These open prompts are where the most important insights often emerge. Please take a moment with each one.

25.	One moment recently when I felt genuinely trusted in this community was...

26.	One thing that makes this community feel safe to me is...

27.	One thing that would strengthen trust in our community is...

28.	If there is anything making trust harder right now that you want to name, this is your space to do so.

** Items marked with an asterisk form the Quick Pulse version (6 items) for use between full administrations.*

Quick Pulse Reference Card

The six Quick Pulse items (drawn from the asterisked items across all four sections) can be used every five to six weeks between full administrations. They provide a rapid signal across all four trust dimensions. Use the wording from whichever version matches your community.

#	Dimension	Primary (6-11)	Adolescent (12-17)	Adult (18+)
1	Respect	Do people here treat me nicely and listen to what I say?	I feel genuinely respected by the people around me in this community.	I experience consistent respect from peers and leaders in this community.
2	Competence	Do the grown-ups here know how to help me learn?	The people leading this community are genuinely capable of supporting what we are doing.	The leaders of this community are genuinely capable of supporting the work we do together.
3	Personal regard	Is there a grown-up here who really knows me - what I like, what's hard, what I'm good at?	At least one person here holds a real sense of who I am and what I'm navigating.	At least one person in this community holds a genuine and informed sense of who I am.
4	Personal regard	If I'm having a hard time, can I tell someone here?	When I'm struggling, I experience this community as a source of support, not a risk.	When I am struggling, I experience this community as a resource rather than a risk.
5	Integrity	When grown-ups say something is important, do they really do it?	There is genuine alignment between what this community says it stands for and how it actually operates.	I experience genuine alignment between this community's stated values and its lived practice.
6	Integrity	Do I feel safe being me here?	I can bring the fullness of who I am into this community and feel welcome.	I can bring the fullness of who I am into this community and experience it as welcome.

Scoring and Interpretation Guide

Calculating dimension scores

For each respondent, calculate the mean score for each dimension (A through D) by averaging the six items within that section. Then calculate the community mean for each dimension by averaging across all respondents. Track these four dimension means over time.

Interpreting scores

4.0 and above: The dimension is strong. Acknowledge this with the community and maintain the rituals that support it.

3.0 to 3.9: The dimension is present but may be uneven. Look at individual items within the dimension to identify where the strain or inconsistency lies. Deepen corresponding rituals.

Below 3.0: The dimension is under significant strain. Pause other initiatives and attend to this dimension before proceeding. A community conversation is likely needed alongside ritual deepening.

What matters most: movement and mismatch

Absolute scores matter less than two patterns. Movement means a dimension trending in a particular direction over successive cycles. Mismatch means a dimension that scores high in one item but low in a related one - for example, community members report feeling respected (item 1) but also that they cannot disagree without cost (item 3). Mismatches are often where the richest and most actionable truth lies.

Response protocols

When scores dip, resist the temptation to fix immediately. Share the headline with the community, name what you are seeing, and ask the community what it recognises in the data. The conversation itself is often more valuable than any intervention. When scores hold or rise, name that too - communities that only hear about problems will stop reporting honestly.

The most important thing this instrument can tell a community is what it is not yet able to say to itself.