As Dan explained to you in the video, an "activation function" is a function applied at each node. It converts the node's input into some output.

The rectified linear activation function (called ReLU) has been shown to lead to very high-performance networks. This function takes a single number as an input, returning 0 if the input is negative, and the input if the input is positive.

Here are some examples:  
**relu(3) = 3**   
**relu(-3) = 0**