

Listening reference

How to do a listening task

General tips

Before the task

- Read *all* the instructions and questions carefully before you listen.
- Try to identify what kind of recording you're going to hear. For example, *a long radio interview, short recordings with different speakers, etc.*
- Can you predict any key topics? What do you already know about these topics? Can you think of any useful topic-related vocabulary?
- Underline key words and ideas in the questions.
- What kind of information do you need to listen for to answer them? For example: *an opinion, a number, etc.*
- Remember, you're going to listen to each recording twice, so don't try to answer all of the questions straight away.

The first time you listen

- Tell the teacher straight away if you can't hear the recording very clearly.
- Try to work out the gist (the main ideas).
- Don't try to translate everything you hear. This takes a lot of time and is almost impossible!
- If you miss something, keep listening! Remember that speakers often emphasize or repeat important topics.
- Stay focused! Some recordings can be quite long. You might find it helpful to write short notes.
- However, don't try to read or write too much while you listen for the first time, because you could miss important information.
- Don't panic if you find a recording difficult. Keep listening. You might understand more than you expect!

The second time you listen

- Listen again for the specific information you need to answer the questions.
- Remember, you will also hear lots of unnecessary information you *don't* need to answer the questions. Don't waste time and energy trying to understand everything!
- Sometimes you will need to listen for *opinions* and *attitudes* as well as facts. Pay attention to the kind of language a speaker uses. Is it positive or negative?
- Don't just listen for key words from the questions. Remember, the speakers in the recording may use synonyms and paraphrases.
- If you have time, read your answers carefully afterwards. Do they make sense? Are they clear and easy to read?

Answering questions

- Check the instructions before you listen. Can you give short answers or do you need to answer in full sentences?
- You will usually hear the answers in the same order as the questions.
- Don't just listen for key words from the questions. You may need to listen for synonyms and paraphrases.
- Check your grammar and spelling carefully afterwards.

Choosing true or false

- Check the instructions before you listen. Do you need to correct the false sentences, or just write *true* or *false*?
- Listen for information which supports or contradicts the ideas in the sentences. You may need to listen for synonyms and paraphrases.
- Remember to think about the *whole meaning* of the sentence. Watch out for any negative forms (*don't, never, etc.*) and qualifying expressions (*most people, fewer than fifteen, etc.*).
- If you have to correct false sentences, check your grammar and spelling carefully afterwards.

Matching

- Check the instructions before you listen. What do you need to match? For example, *people, places, etc.*
- You may hear the answers in a different order to the questions.
- Listen carefully to all of the speakers before you make your final choice.
- Watch out! Speakers may use similar language, but with different meanings.

Choosing multiple-choice options (A, B, C, etc.) for one long recording

- Read the questions *and* all the options before you listen.
- You will usually hear the answers in the same order as the questions in the task.
- The final question may sometimes ask you to think about a speaker's general attitude to a topic.
- You may hear information that relates to each option in the recording, but only *one* answer will be correct.
- Think about each option carefully before you make your final choice. *Why* is an option correct or incorrect?

Choosing multiple-choice options (A, B, C, etc.) for short recordings

- Look at the task and questions. How many mini-recordings are you going to hear?
- Think about *why* someone is speaking (e.g. *to give information, to advertise something, etc.*).



Summarizing

- Read the instructions carefully. How many words do you need to write?
- Listen once for gist. Make a note of any key ideas you hear.
- Listen again and decide which ideas are the most important.
- Write your summary. Try to use simple sentences, giving only the most essential information.
- You do not need to include your own opinion.
- Check your summary carefully. Is it clear and easy to understand? Have you used the correct number of words?

Completing sentences

- Read the instructions carefully. How many words do you need to write in each gap?
- What kind of information do you need to listen for to complete each gap? For example, *a year, a personal adjective, a job etc.*
- Remember, you may hear more than one year, personal adjective etc., but only one will fit the sentence correctly.
- Write the exact word or words you hear. Do not add extra words.
- Read the completed sentences afterwards. Do they make sense?

OVER TO YOU

You can also practise and improve your listening skills outside the classroom. Try these ideas:

- Find extra listening practice in this Workbook and on the Oxford Online Learning Zone for Bachillerato.
- Remember, when you listen at home, you can play a recording as often as you like!
- Try listening to a recording and reading the transcript at the same time. This will help to build your confidence.
- When you've completed a task, look at the transcript again and make a note of any useful new vocabulary or interesting language.
- Try watching English-language films and TV programmes with subtitles (words on the screen). This is a fun as well as useful way to practise listening.
- Buy or borrow English-language audio books. Try reading and listening to an English novel or short story at the same time.
- Listen to English-language music. You can find the lyrics of many songs on the internet. Listen, try to guess what the words are, then check them online.
- Search for English-language news resources online. Some websites feature video reports and podcasts which you can use for extra listening practice.

Listening often feels like a 'difficult' skill. Don't worry – you don't usually need to understand every word to complete a task! The more you practise listening, the more you'll understand.