

How to get better at listening examinations – a few tips



The listening examination is often overlooked as students feel they will either get it right or wrong on the day and nothing can be done about it. This is far from true, when some examinations have 45% of the final grade based on the listening component, training and practice will help. Here are a few tips to start becoming a better listener.

1. Do not get discouraged!

Listening to a foreign language can be at first a daunting task especially if you are beginner or intermediate students.

If you were to switch on a radio in the foreign language you study, it will take you a good while to figure out the topic discussed. However, if you **listen carefully and regularly** you will notice you pick up more and more.



When you are in class, the listening exercises are targeted to the topic you are studying so this in a certain way simplifies the task as you know what type of vocabulary, structures and cultural

references you can expect.

In an exam situation, you do not know what topic is going to come up but the fact that you are given time to read the questions beforehand will give you an idea of what type of conversation or listening extract you will be listening too.

Practice is the best medicine for improving your listening skills!

2. Preparing during the year

Oral and listening practices are linked to one another. It is very important when you want to get better at listening that your oral proficiency also follows. It is seldom that students write out lists of vocabulary to prepare for their aural examinations but when practicing they fail to recognise the words when spoken. It is therefore very important to associate the sound to the written version.

www.learnforeignlanguageskills.com is developing such vocabulary lists in French, Spanish and German. These will be available for free to registered users (registering is free of charge). **Listening to the audio files and reading the words at the same time will help you improve your listening skills.** Learn,



repeat and use the words you have learnt in your oral work. It is always useful to listen to the material a second time a couple of weeks later to make

sure you have made **the association between the word and the sound.**

3. Preparing for a specific examination

As well as listening exercises you will have done during the year, the most important part of any listening examination is to **train yourself with similar/mock examinations**. This allows you to become very **familiar** with the **examination format** and to work out YOUR best way of handling the examination.

Students are all different and go about answering an examination in their own way. There are however some **key advice they can all follow**:



Read the questions very carefully and **underline** the key words.

- **Predict** keywords you will hear (usually about 3 or 4). Remember you can make notes on the examination paper.

- As you start practicing, **try out different methods**. For example, try listening to the extract the first time it is played without making any notes, mentally you are listening to where the answers are and during the second listening you know where the answers are and therefore can concentrate on writing them down.

The second practice, try writing the answers as you hear them. You will quickly see **which technique works best for you**.

- Sometimes you will hear the answer and recognise the word but as you need to answer in English, you will need that extra time to think of the English word, unfortunately the examination does not stop to let you think, write the word you heard in the foreign language and at the pause, go over it and you will see you will remember it. This way you do not lose any valuable time.

- **Practice** mock examination which follow the exact format of your examination, this is why www.learnforeignlanguageskills.com offers you the best practice for your examinations. We have the files in the exact format of the listening examinations with the pauses, etc...

4. Using the transcript

The transcript is the exact written text which you hear in the audio. It can be useful in several ways:

- If you are finding the listening exercises very difficult, it might be helpful to have the transcript beside you to help you answering the questions. It will give you an opportunity to **highlight the vocabulary or structures you need to concentrate on**. After studying this new vocabulary, you will find that the listening practice will become easier bit by bit.

- You can also use the transcript after doing the listening exercise and before checking the answers. **Take a different colour pen and write in your answers based on the reading of the transcript**. It will once again

highlight new vocabulary and structures you can learn.

- You can also use the transcript after having done the whole practice and listen to the audio while reading the transcript to **pick out new vocabulary and structures**.

5. Knowing the marking scheme

Another important feature of any examination preparation is **knowing how many marks each question is worth**. This is why

www.learnforeignlanguageskills.com provides you with the answers and the marking scheme for each section. It will help you know how much writing/detail is required and how marks are taken off. By giving you the opportunity to grade your own work, you will quickly master the requirements of the examination.

