

In The Name Of Allah
Most Gracious
Most Merciful

Dedicated To My Departed Mother

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Listening Skills

IELTS listening tests your ability to understand spoken language in a variety of social and academic contexts. The test consists of four sections each with 10 questions and takes about 30 minutes to complete. Sections one and two are primarily about everyday events, such as conversations about accommodation, shopping, or short talks giving practical information for daily life. Sections three and four are academically-oriented and about the typical situations students face in their courses of studies. All candidates taking the IELTS test do the same type of listening test and the questions follow the order of the text. The answers are all, first, written in the Question Booklet. At the end of the test ten minutes is given to transfer the answers to the Answer Sheet.

To take the test successfully the test takers are not expected to have any specialized knowledge, but they should be able to deal with a range of topics. Nor are they expected to have a thorough understanding of all the material. Their success depends on knowing what information is needed to listen for answering the question. Each of the four sections in the listening test may have up to three different types of question testing a range of skills.

IELTS Tactics For Listening is a comprehensive preparation book aimed at developing linguistic and practical skills presupposed to approach the IELTS listening module. The book can be self-studied and taught in a class although mostly authored for the latter.

In *IELTS Tactics For Listening*, at first, an attempt has been made to elaborate on various listening skills required for taking IELTS listening tests. Generally, five listening skills have been identified; explanations and exemplifications have been provided to elucidate the points made about these skills. The chapters classify the IELTS listening test questions into six categories. Each chapter discusses the points concerning one type of the test and ample exercises have been given in each to prepare the students for that type of test. The questions and exercises are standardized having been designed from standard materials.

After practicing the book, mostly through teachers' supervision, the students get solely ready for various IELTS test types. Further 40-question test practice is definitely required to apply the skills presented in this book and achieve a higher score in the listening test. To do this, the author recommends IELTS Cambridge books 1-9 in tandem with this book.

Rasool Barghi
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Skill 1: Listening For Specific Information

You are in the departure hall of the Heathrow airport waiting for your plane to board en route to Imam Khomeini Airport. You have got a ticket showing your flight number, date and destination but the gate you will have to enter to board your plane is not given. To pick your departure gate number, you will have to listen to the uninterrupted announcements from the airport speakers announcing the flight numbers, dates, times, and the gates for arrivals and departures of hundreds of flights landing or taking off in the airport. Do you ever have to listen to, or understand, all the announcements to find your gate number? What you will most probably do is having such key words as *date*, *time* and *flight number*, and *destination*, Tehran Airport, in your mind while listening carefully to the announcements. In this case, you are *listening for specific information*.

Similarly, parts of the IELTS listening tests provide the same conditions in various settings to evaluate your ability to locate key details in a piece of recording. In doing so, you will need to find the KEY WORDS (KW) of the question. The KWs are the words that help you find the most probable location of the answer in the listening material. Do the following exercises and find the relevant and specific piece of information for each answer.



1.1 Listen to someone talking about a concert. Answer the questions 1-2.

Concert details

Full price tickets: **\$35.00**

Student price: 1.....

Concert begins at: 2.....



1.2 Listen to someone talking about an English course schedule. Answer the question.

When does the man start the English course?

A. March

B. April

C. September



1.3 listens to someone talking about the Flagship of the Royal Fleet. Complete the gaps.

The *Mary Rose* sank in the year The king stood on the shore and watched her go down. The ship then lay on the sea bed for 2..... years. In 1982 she was 3..... and brought back to dry land. By analyzing the 4..... of the ship, scientists believe they are closer to learning why she sank.

Skill 2. Guessing the incoming information

Technically speaking, when we are comprehending any listening material in any language, two consecutive processes take place in our brain, "*Bottom-up processing*" and "*top-down processing*". Through the first process, bottom-up, the information from our surroundings is transmitted to our brain via our ears. To comprehend the received information, in one millionth of a second, the second process is activated where the brain browses its files,

having been stored in our brain files since our birth, to switch on the files that match the incoming information and in this way listening comprehension takes place. We cannot comprehend the talk on the phone when the sound quality is poor. This is due to the fact that the bottom-up processing is not working properly. Nor do we understand a Chinese statement or children understand political debates on TV inasmuch as no top-down processing takes place.

This sheds light on the significance of *guessing* in listening comprehension. As a matter of fact when guessing, we are galvanizing the top-down processing *prior* to the bottom-up processing so as to accelerate listening comprehension. In general, listening, whether in test conditions or real life, is a matter of making guesses and testing the guesses. In approaching listening tests of any kind, before the recording is played, try to guess the probable information or answer in gaps and concentrate on the listening and test your guess. When guessing, predict the part of speech of the words (noun, verb, adverb, and adjective) and think of general words (numbers, proper names, basic word). This would make your guesses come true.

Imagine you are listening to the following. What kind of information might you want to consider as KWS to listen for in each case? What type of information do you expect to find as answers?

Question	Type Of Information
At what time do the doctors start seeing the patients at the Dean End Health Centre?	
Who is Mrs. Sutton worried about?	
What is the commencement date for the Spanish class this term?	

Skill 3. Listening For Main Ideas and Supporting Information

Imagine you are at a party. You join a group of people who have already been talking to each other. The first thing you do is trying to work out what they are talking about. What is the topic? And then, what is the main idea? You can get an idea of the topic from the vocabulary they are using. By concentrating on the words they are using you can partly get the main idea. The main idea is the main point or message.



1.4 You will hear four mini talks. Listen and write the main topic and the supporting statements for the numbers 1-4.

Main idea	Supporting Statement
1. the cost of a project	\$43 million since 1990
2.	
3.	
4.	



1.5 Listen and answer

What is the subject of the man's talk?

Skill 4. Sentence Stress Recognition

Sentence stress is the music of spoken English. Like word stress, sentence stress can help you understand spoken English, especially when spoken fast. Sentence stress is what gives English its rhythm or "beat". The word stress is accent on one syllable within a word while sentence stress is accent on certain words within a sentence. What's more, sentences have two types of word; content words and structure words. Content words are the key words of a sentence. They are the important words that carry the meaning or sense. Structure words are not very important words. They are small, simple words that make the sentence correct grammatically. It is important to note that the speakers usually stress the content words.

The most important point concerning IELTS exam is that in the listening material the words with the higher sentence stress are either most probably the answer for the majority of the listening test items or the key words for them.



1.6 Listen to the following recording several times and write the words that you hear have higher sentence stress.



1.7 Listen to the following recording several times and write the words that you hear have higher sentence stress.



1.7 Now listen again and answer the following questions.

- The speaker's topic of discussion is different 1.....in history
- The handout covers 2.....basic topics.
- As well as history students, there are students of 3.....at the lecture.
- The lecturer's motivation for studying history is that it is 4.....



1.8 Listen to the following recording. It is taken from Cambridge IELTS Book 3 and see how the answers to the table questions have higher stress.

University Helpline	
Type of help	Examples
Financial	• Grants • 1.....
2.....	• Childcare • nursery
3.....	• essay deadlines • Using 4.....
5.....	• Individual interests • 6.....

Skill 5. Signpost Word Recognition

Signpost is a post put up on the streets to direct you on the streets. Similarly, there are words in a speech to brighten you up towards the framework of the talk illuminating the major parts of the talk into distinctively bright parts. These words are "*signpost words*". They signal what the speaker is going to talk about next. They are like an arrow showing you the direction of their talk. They include such words as *another, next, the second, finally one of the, the other, also*, etc. These words can help you a lot classify the listening sections into recognizable chunks for finding the answers to the questions.

Further points about the listening test in IELTS

In the IELTS listening test you need to take the following rubrics into careful consideration:

- **Spelling is strictly important.** You will lose a mark for adding or dropping a single letter. Make sure you know the spelling of the most common words such as months, weekdays or some other words commonly used.
- In approaching an IELTS listening test item, you will need to do three things simultaneously; listening, reading and writing. You will most probably excel in the test when your **lion's share attention is devoted to listening rather than reading or writing**. To do this, the test itself gives you, *barely*, enough time to read the questions before listening is played, to take off, a bit, the *reading* load. The *writing* load, moreover, is greatly lifted by restricting the answers to **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS**. What you will need to do is paying your full attention to listening, while having the required information in mind.
- **Read and listen to the instructions.** Make sure you follow them correctly.
- **Time management in the listening section is extremely important.** At the beginning of the IELTS Test there is a 2.5 minute introduction: between the sections you will be given some time to read the questions and check the answers. The extra time given to read the questions and check the answers can be used to read the rest of the questions and preview the questions from the next section.
- **Continue to listen to the conversation** while you are writing your answers.
- A very important key in the listening part of the test is that **you should be AHEAD of the recording** so you have time to go through the questions and know what information you are looking for while the recording is being played.
- **Don't panic if you miss out on any answer;** jump to the next question. Attempt the missed answer when you get extra time to check the answers.
- At the end of the test, **carefully transfer answers to the transfer sheet.** Ensure you don't make mistakes and write legibly.
- **There is no negative marking,** so make a guess in case you have missed out on any answer. Don't leave any question unanswered.
- If you **miss some questions out, leave gaps in your answer sheet.** Take special care to write your answers in the right order. When you miss questions out, it can be easy to start writing questions out of sequence. Check now and again just to make sure you are writing answers down in the right place.
- Remember that, sometimes, you are probably not going to hear the same words in the question and in the answer. **IELTS questions sometimes involve 'paraphrasing'**- using a sentence with the same meaning but not using the same words. For example, on the

recording you might hear: "Less than a quarter of university students took part." while on the answer sheet you might see: "Only 23% of candidates actually sat the examination."

- You should **listen for keywords** - that's important, but you should also listen for 'synonyms'
- **Only write down what you hear** - never abbreviate, or shortcut.
- Many IELTS questions involve listening to numbers and quantities. However, in natural speech the difference between '16%' and '60%' is often difficult to hear if you haven't practiced. Get used to listening to numbers - the only way you can do this is to get some listening material and keep practicing!
- If you are answering a Multiple Choice question that involves a number of sentences or texts and you miss the answer, **choose the longest answer**. The answer is probably going to be a paraphrase of another sentence and that means it will probably be longer.
- **Practice listening to something every day**. There are countless sources: watch an English language movie, watch BBC, NHK satellite channels or any other source.

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Completing Notes



Completing notes

In this type of test you are required to listen to a piece of recording and answer the note given. Pay attention to the following points about this type of test.

- This type of question usually appears on the first section of the test. If you want to get a good general score in the listening section you should avoid making mistakes. This type of test is, almost literally, the easiest part of the listening test. So you should fully concentrate to excel.
- This type of question tests the specific information or detail such as basic word, time, date, address, etc.
- Check the example as it warms you up as a starting point.
- Check the word limit which most probably does NOT exceed THREE WORDS OR NUMBERS.
- Check the grammar of the gaps.
- If any item is about numbers, numbers are usually said in groups of one, two or three.
- If any item is about proper names, proper names are sometimes spelled very fast and you cannot keep up with writing as they are being spelled out. It is best, first, to write the words with your common sense and when the speaker spells them you can correct, and note, the mistakes you made.
- Look at the general headings on the note to be completed.

Listen to the following exercises and complete the gaps.