



These tried and true listening activities will help you get your students listening and communicating in English. The recipes work with most teaching scenarios and situations. Just modify the basic recipe with your own basic ingredients (age, level, topic).

This is the fourth in a series of 5 posts. See the posts about [Speaking](#), [Writing](#) and [Reading](#). Also, view [these](#) tips and [these](#) activities.

## Fill In The Blanks

**1** When you think of a listening lesson, you probably think of this standard. Commonly known as a "[cloze](#)" activity, it's used by almost every textbook.

**Suggested Level:** A2 and above.

**Ingredients:** Individuals. Handout with text of a song, a conversation, any audio. See [this](#) example.

**Instructions:** Provide each person with a handout of the audio. Read the script provided or play the audio with your own words filled in. Students listen and fill in. Repeat as necessary. Check the answers together.

**Cooking Tip:** Get students to practice what they've listened to and also "rewrite" the script to produce their own version and personalize. Have them perform it for the class who'll be listening!

**Serves Up:** top down processing, intensive listening, transactional listening

## Comprehension - The 5Ws

**2** Of course you can play some audio and have students take notes, listen and then complete a series of comprehension questions. No problem with that. But this 5 Ws activity can be used with any audio that is a narrative and really tests students listening skills. The news also provides ready made context and background.

**Suggested Level:** B1 and above

**Ingredients:** Individuals. [5 Ws handout](#). News report audio or audio of a story.

**Instructions:** Play the audio once. Then give out the handout for students to take notes. Play the audio again letting the students take notes. Finally play the audio again pausing and taking up the answers.

**Cooking Tip:** Use a popular news story of the day or [this](#) Newsround, fun, news audio.

**Serves Up:** background knowledge, comprehension check, note taking

## Extensive Listening

**3** Too much of listening in class is “intensive” and bottom up, not for overall understanding and pleasure. We should allow students more opportunity to listen just to appreciate the audio.

**Suggested Level:** B1 and above

**Ingredients:** individuals, song audio or music videos.

**Instructions:** Provide each person with a [song](#) or [video](#) appreciation handout. Play each song or video and get students to then fill in the chart. Repeat as necessary. Compare with other students.

**Cooking Tip:** Sometimes this can turn into a good debate. Be prepared for that. Also select audio or video that your students will enjoy and want to listen to. Ask them!

**Serves Up:** *critical listening, extensive listening, top down processing*

## Listening For Differences



Students need to listen closely to note differences with an original text or knowledge set. Test students by reading out loud the text with differences from the one provided to the student. Also, this activity can get students listening to each other and being a source of listening material.

**Suggested Level:** B2 and above

**Ingredients:** Pairs. Text differences handout.

**Instructions:** Each student has a handout which is slightly different. One is a correct version, the other incorrect. The student with the incorrect version reads out their script. As they read the passage, the other student must listen for errors and stop and say – “No, no, no, that’s wrong! It should say \_\_\_\_\_.” Correct together as a class to have one good script.

**Cooking Tip:** Read out loud the good stories prior as a whole class to prepare students for the activity.

**Serves Up:** selective listening, noting differences, interactional listening

## Note Taking

**5** Bottom up processing activities involve students listening and correctly identifying sounds. It can be as simple as testing student knowledge of minimal pairs (boat or boot) or stress (13 or 30). This activity involves students correctly listening to others and recording the correct information.

**Suggested Level:** All levels

**Ingredients:** pairs, handout with information to test student listening.

**Instructions:** Provide each person with a handout. Partners take turns saying their sentences and recording the information. Encourage students to ask for correction and check understanding. Check after – did they get all the information correct?

**Cooking Tip:** Do this activity first as a whole class with the teacher reading out the information and students recording. This will teach students how to do the activity. Then you can do this with any 2 sets of information.

**Serves Up:** bottom up processing, note taking, listening for detail

# TEACHING LISTENING



Here are some classic recipes for activating your students' listening skills and getting them listening for accuracy or meaning. Online or F2F.

## CLOZE

He \_\_\_\_\_s me!

Listen and fill in the blanks with what you hear.

## THE 5 Ws



Listen for general meaning and record the 5W details.

## GIST

Main Idea



Listen and note the general meaning and overall facts.

## DIFFERENCES



Listen to two passages and compare, note the differences.

## NOTE TAKING



Listen and take notes of important details.

## STORIES



Audio stories. Listen and then students retell.

## TPR



Listen and do it!  
Total Physical Response.

## DRAWING



Listen and draw what you hear and imagine the situation.

## DIRECTIONS



Listen to instructions and perform the steps.

## MUSIC



Listen for enjoyment. Also, listen then repeat the chorus.

## SHADOWING



Listen and repeat what the model has said.

## DICTIONATION



Listen. Write the sentences.  
Try "running dictation".

## EXTENSIVE LISTENING



Listen to what interests you.  
Use same language subtitles.

## GAMES



Memory / Telephone game.  
Lastonstanding.

## OTHER



What other ways are there?

# Storytelling. Prediction.

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Stories and narratives have built in motivation for listening. Everyone loves a good story! Choose stories to read to students and stop at times and have them predict what will happen next. If they are listening well, they'll be able to predict. See [this](#) funny story or also [this](#) one.

**Suggested Level:** B2 and above

**Ingredients:** whole class or groups with one reader.

**Instructions:** Read to the students the handout [6]. Pause at times and ask, “What will happen next?” Continue to the end and ask the students the last question. Did anyone listen well enough to answer correctly?

**Cooking Tip:** Short jokes and funny stories with punch lines work well with this activity. See our full [Best Funny Stories](#).

**Serves Up:** top down processing, prediction, social listening

# Describe. Do. Draw.



These are always a fun activities. Students love acting and drawing. The teacher simply asks students to do certain things and students must act it (like “Simon Says”). Fun to tell students they are robots under your command! Here is a variation where students draw.

**Suggested Level:** All Levels

**Ingredients:** whole class. Simple drawing or photograph. Blank pieces of paper.

**Instructions:** Provide students with a blank piece of paper. Tell them you will describe a picture and they have to listen and draw it. Allow students to ask questions as you go along. Describe the picture – [handout](#). Pause to let students draw. Compare student drawings to the original (show it on a screen, overhead or on the board).

**Cooking Tip:** One nice option is for the teacher to describe their apartment floor plan and have students draw it and ask questions to elicit the locations of things.

**Serves Up:** active listening, drawing, interactive listening



# Instructions. Explanations.



Instructions get students listening intently to complete a task. It can be done simply by having one student explain the steps to do something to another student who completes the task (ex. folding paper to make a model plane) or as a **TPR** activity (Total Physical Response). Here is one variation.

**Suggested Level:** B2 and above

**Ingredients:** pairs, **handouts** with grids and differing information.

**Instructions:** Provide each pair with the grid containing information 8. In pairs, students explain where and what is contained in each square. They continue listening to each other to complete the activity.

**Cooking Tip:** For lower level students provide an X and Y index for easier explanation. Also model for the whole class first.

**Serves Up:** top down processing, instructions, selective listening

# Listening Cloze

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Songs are perfect materials for a listening activity. Make sure though to choose an appropriate song for listening – speed and tempo, vocabulary, clarity etc....

**Suggested Level:** B1 and above

**Ingredients:** individuals. Song audio or music video. Lyrical listening sheet.

**Instructions:** Ask students about the song topic or some pre-listening questions to prompt schema. Play the song once allowing students to just listen to the song. Provide each student with a song listening cloze handout. Play the song again while students listen for the words and fill in the listening cloze. Take up by playing the song and pausing one last time.

**Cooking Tip:** Add a word bank with possible answers for lower level students.

**Serves Up:** music, transactional listening, top down processing

## Lastonestanding

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A classic song activity that is super simple to do in class and which will get students practicing their listening skills like nothing else!

**Suggested Level:** A2 and above

**Ingredients:** whole class, a popular, faster song. Blank pieces of paper.

**Instructions:** Choose a song students enjoy (for example [Hello Goodbye](#), The Beatles). Write 5 words on the board from the song that repeat often ( Hello – Goodbye - Go - High – Low ). Students choose a word and write it large on a sheet of paper. Play the song. When students hear their word they stand. If they hear it again, they sit. Last students standing win!

**Cooking Tip:** You can also put students in groups so the group with the most standing will win. See [example games](#).

**Serves Up:** selective listening, bottom up processing, fun

## Dictation. Running Dictation.

**11** There are many ways to do a dictation. We practiced one earlier, [dictogloss](#) where students reconstruct a short text read by the teacher. Students get motivated by the need to be accurate and the challenge to repeat the original. Dictation can be as simple as writing sentences on the board and covering them. Then read them for students to listen and copy. After, uncover the sentences and take up the answers. [Running dictation](#) is a variation that makes the activity more fun and active. Here's how you do it.

**Suggested Level:** B1 and above

**Ingredients:** Small groups. One “recorder” per group. A text for each group on the wall of the class.

**Instructions:** Provide each group with a [handout](#) to write down the text (or just use a blank piece of paper). Assign each group a text on the wall of the classroom. Students in the group run to their text and read. They return and tell the recorder what it says and it is written down. Continue until the text is completely recorded.

**Cooking Tip:** Students will be very excited and noisy. Try to keep the noise level down by asking students and signaling them to speak softly.

**Serves Up:** accuracy, communication, game

## Listening Games



There are many quick listening games that a teacher can do quite quickly in class. Here are a couple classics.

**Suggested Level:** All Levels

**The Telephone Game:** Put students into lines or rows. Whisper a sentence into the first student’s ear (make sure you write it down on paper!). That student then whispers what they heard to the next student and so on. The final student in line runs to the board and writes the sentence on the board. The closest to the original sentence wins.

**The Memory Game:** Start with a sentence like, “Today I went shopping and bought some cheese.” The next student must repeat, adding a vocabulary item. “Today I went shopping and bought some cheese and an apple.” Continue. If a student can’t remember or repeats an item, they must sit down.

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