

Listening Skills

You may be wondering how to improve your English listening skills given the vast array of resources out there. The huge selection of online courses, curricula, and methods can get overwhelming pretty quickly!

The good news is that this article has a lot of ways to level up your language listening abilities. So, keep reading for a few **stress-free techniques** that are sure to improve your listening skills in English.

How to improve listening skills in English

➤ *Prepare correctly*

Like most challenges in life, one of the keys to leveling up your English listening skills is preparation. Though this might seem daunting, you only need to take three steps to set yourself up for learning success: set a goal, make a plan, and track your progress.

➤ *Set a goal*

Learning a new language can be intimidating, especially if you think about the challenge of understanding native speakers, the grammar points you'll have to master, and the sheer amount of new vocabulary (there are roughly 1 million words in the English language).

So, goals are important because they help you break up the journey into doable tasks. That being said, it's important to set positive and realistic goals so you don't become frustrated. For example, when learning English grammar, you may set a goal to learn how to use "can" and "could" instead of trying to memorize every single rule.

➤ *Make a plan*

Next, you need a plan to accomplish your goal. No one plan will work for everyone, so ask yourself how you learn best. Do you like visuals or music? Memorizing rules? Learning from stories?

The best resources to improve your English listening skills will combine a variety of learning styles and techniques so that you make all-around improvements. Once you understand your own learning style, you can make a plan on how to improve your English listening skills based on which resources will work best for you.

A schedule and a daily or weekly checklist can help you focus on specific steps towards your language learning goals. A sample schedule may look like:

- Day 1, listen to an English podcast on half time using a transcript
- Day 2, listen to the same podcast on normal time without a transcript
- Day 3, listen for the final time, making notes on what you heard and the grammar and vocabulary used
- Day 4, write a description of the podcast and record yourself reading it aloud

Having a consistent schedule is key to successfully learning listening skills in English.

➤ *Track your progress*

It's important to verify that your plan on how to improve your English listening skills works for you. After each learning session or lesson, note how you practiced, how much you understood, and any new words you learned. At the end of the week, summarize your progress by writing a brief reflection on what you learned or rating yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. As time passes, you will be able to see a pattern in your growth and understand which exercises are helping or hurting your English listening skills.

Tracking your progress may reveal that your goal of listening to 5 new podcasts before next weekend was not realistic. On the other hand, you might realize your plan for learning past simple tense was effective! When you have a better idea of how you learn (and on what timeline), you can start customizing your learning plan to your unique needs. Sound overwhelming? Luckily, there are many ways to track progress: you can write it down in a planner, make a note on your phone, or even use an app.

➤ ***Focus on active listening, not passive***

Have you ever listened to an entire conversation, only to realize you actually had no idea what was being discussed? That's what happens when we're not participating in "active listening." Active listening requires mental engagement from the listener, whereas passive listening means that the listener is simply *hearing* what is being said.

Though passive listening might work well in some cases in your mother tongue (for example, a friend venting about a frustrating day), it won't give you the tools to improve your English listening skills.

Active listeners usually ask **questions** either in the moment when face-to-face with a speaker, or writing them down for follow-up later. If you struggle with active listening, take notes.

When taking notes, try not to write down what is being said word for word. Instead, summarize the speaker's main points, including key phrases or new words. By forcing your brain to work extra hard, you're strengthening your "listening muscles" and increasing your chance of remembering those new words next time you hear them!

➤ ***Have conversations***

One of the best ways to improve your English listening skills is through conversation. Though it can be intimidating, you have to talk to English speakers, preferably native or fluent ones, in order to get better at English.

Luckily, studies show that consistent conversation elevates mood and decreases loneliness. This means even a brief discussion with a coworker, friend, or family member can create positive feelings toward language learning and make you more likely to keep practicing.

Though it can be daunting, sometimes the nerves we get from speaking to a highly skilled English speaker can also push us to do our very best active listening. This in turn strengthens our ability to recall vocabulary, speak clearly, and pick up on words we might not have learned yet. Even if your vocabulary is limited, practicing with a language partner or tutor will ultimately help you feel more comfortable finding new words to express yourself.

➤ ***Use resources***

Using the right resources for your personal needs is critical to advancing your English listening skills. Not sure where to start? English podcasts, films, and TV shows are three great ways to improve English listening skills while having fun.

➤ ***English podcasts***

With English being the official language of over 50 countries worldwide, there's a podcast for every interest, from sports commentary to funny stories to lectures on history and culture. Having trouble choosing? Check out this list of the 10 best podcasts to help you learn English.

➤ ***Movies and TV in English***

If you've ever taken a language class, you'll know that movies and TV are a classic way to improve English listening skills. Much like podcasts, these media offer a wide array of genres. Unlike podcasts, everything being discussed is also happening in front of you on the screen! The visuals make movies and TV great options if you're early in the process of learning English listening skills and need a little extra support.

Movies, TV, and podcasts can be especially helpful because they offer valuable insight into culture. Ever noticed how someone's sense of humor can be really different from yours depending on where they're from?

A fun and effective way to practice active listening skills is noting jokes while watching a comedy. Then, do a little internet digging to see if any jokes have a cultural origin or history.

Conclusion

Knowing how to improve your listening skills in English is just the first step, the rest comes down to quality practice. You can ensure you're getting the best possible practice by setting yourself up for success with proper preparation, having meaningful conversations and using resources that work for you.

After you've identified your own language-learning needs and developed a plan to meet those goals, the most important part of improving listening skills in English is active engagement with another English speaker.

Although casual conversation with a coworker or classmate can be helpful, why not try an expert? On Preply, thousands of experienced English tutors offer 1-on-1 sessions for all your English listening needs.

They can also recommend additional resources and give you feedback on your English learning plan. So what are you waiting for? It's time to start taking the small steps to reach native level English listening skill.