

ACTIVITIES REQUIRED FOR DEVELOPING THE LISTENING SKILL

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A student may be intelligent, but he will not be benefitted of his education, if he has not developed adequate listening skills in the classroom. Students who listen keenly to directions and lectures -- rather than simply hearing them -- have distinct advantages. Efficient listening in the classroom saves time and results in improving academic and social skills. As teachers we recognize the importance of listening both in learning and as a vital social skill.

For learners, listening presents a challenge for a variety of reasons, among which are the following:

- **Listening involves multiple modes:** Listening involves the interpersonal and interpretive modes of communication. It requires the listener to assume either a participative role in face-to-face conversations, or a non-participative role in listening to other people speak or present.
- **Listening involves all varieties of language:** In addition to listening to lectures and presentations in academic and formal settings, learners have also to partake or listen to exchanges that involve various levels of colloquialism.
- **Listening involves "altered" and "reduced" language forms:** In addition to dealing with the vocabulary and structures of the language, listeners have to learn to comprehend reduced forms of the language (e.g., *I wanna go*, *Just a sec*).
- **Listening involves variable rates of delivery:** Unlike a reading text that is at the learner's control, a listening text is constantly moving and at variable speeds that often cannot be controlled by the listener.

Because of all these factors, listening activities often create high levels of anxiety and stress among learners that can interfere with comprehension. Let's see few activities to improve students' listening skill that aim at improving students thinking and making them move and work together. One should not allow the students to get overly comfortable or familiar with how an exercise/activity is going to look.

1. Relaying the message

This game is also known as “running dictation,” is a great active ice breaker, as well as a common way to make student listen.

The planning

- a. Students need to put in pair or group of three, assigning them as a runner and as a writer. Let the writer sit in one end of the room.
- b. Past the pre-printed matter at the other side of the room, one from each group. These messages can be same or other, easy or difficult, long or short, depending upon the standard of the class.
- c. When the referee says start, the runner runs to the message, reads and remembers what they can. This can be done with few sentences or as little as one word. The main aim is to be able to relay it accurately to the writer.
- d. The runner goes back to the writer to relay the part of the message that they memorized. The writer writes down.
- e. Repeat until the messages is complete. Teams score points for speed but more importantly for accuracy of spelling and punctuation.

2. Back-to-back interview

What better way to improve listening skills than to listen to each other? This is a great activity for practicing listening without relying on lip reading or actions, It also incorporates speaking practice, thus killing two birds with one stone. You can use this activity to introduce famous people you want to talk about during the lesson.

The Planning

- a. Pairs of students sit back-to-back, one at the interviewer with a list of questions.
- b. The interviewee is given a famous person to role play, with a list of answer. (This can also be done as an exercise to learn more about each other personally, For example, at the beginning of a course when students don't know each other well).
- c. The interviewer asks the questions writing down the answers as they go along.
- d. The fastest interviewer to work out who they're talking to wins!

3. Follow the directions

This activity proved excellent practice which will prepare students to ask for directions in a foreign country. It allows students to gain audio rather than visual practice with receiving directions, giving them the ability to understand step by step instructions.

The planning

- a. Provide students with a street map, either a real one or something tailored to the activity and their level. You can even go crazy and create a big one for the classroom floor!
- b. Split the students into teams, and have one person go at a time.
- c. Read instructions for the student to follow, such as “go straight two blocks.” To win a point, the students must successfully navigate the map until they find the right sort, the lost friend or the buried treasure.

4. Telephone

In this game, students are responsible for listening carefully to their peers as well as successfully relaying a message. It encourages students to determine similar sounding words from one other, and can be used as starter activity to introduce any topic.

The planning

- a. Create two teams of students and set up both teams in lines. The end of each team line should be at the whiteboard.
- b. Whisper a word or sentence to the student farthest away from the whiteboard, and then have them whisper the message they heard to the next student. Each student whispers to the next until the end of the line.
- c. The last student writes the messages on the board. The winner is the team with the most accurate spelling, pronunciation and content, although bonus points for originality and hilarity may be awarded!

5. Minimal pairs card hold-up

Improve your students’ knowledge of proper pronunciation with this quick-fire game, which is good for reinforcing phonics lessons.

The Planning

- a. Give a set of pre-prepared word cards to each team (there can be many teams as you want, depending on how many card sets you have). Go here for a useful list of minimal pairs.

- b. Students spread the word cards out on a table.
- c. Call a word out. For example: “feet!” The students have to search their decks and hold up that word’s card as fast as possible.

6. Movie clip quiz

You can also incorporate movies into just about any lesson, giving students a welcome moment of relaxation and respite from learning (or so they think!). Movies and TV shows provide a more authentic speed of real word speech.

The Planning

- a. Give students a question to play, students must pay close attention and stand up when they hear the answer to the questions. Pause the movie and see if the first person who stood up knows the correct answer.
- b. Ask the second question. Repeat. Alternatively, you can give the students a list of questions to answer and allow the clip to play through entirely. Then you see who has the most correct answers at the end.

7. Song gap-fill

Songs are a great way to engage reluctant listeners, as they can be tailored perfectly to fit the preferences of the students. Why not use the latest pop song? Lyric repetition is welcomed here!

The planning

- a. Give each students/pair the song lyrics with some words missing. To make easier you can put the missing words in a box at the top of the page.
- b. Play the song, pausing if necessary. The aim is for the students to fill in the missing words.
- c. Once at the end, go through the answers to see which students/pair got the most correct.

8. Order-the-lyrics

This activity is a variation on the above, giving students practice in noticing the subtle differences between lyrics in music.

The planning

- a. Pairs get a set of the song lyrics cut up into lines.

- b. As they listen to the chosen song, they have to put the lyrics in the right order on the table. Repeat the song if necessary. You can always have sing-along after the activity is completed!

9. Listen and throw

Of course, there is no reason why you shouldn't go back to your trusty textbook. In this exercise, students are listening for a specific answer to a question in an audio dialogue.

The planning

- a. Make the student sit in a circle and split them into three or four teams.
- b. Give each individual a piece of paper that's their team color. Have them scrunch the paper into ball.
- c. Place three baskets in the middle of the circle, each with possible answer written on it.
- d. Ask a question relating to the listening exercise – this should preferably be something that appears near the end of the dialogue. For example, “Whose birthday is it?”
- e. Students listen to the dialogue and throw their paper ball when they know the answer.
Count the colors in the correct basket to determine the winner.

10. Slap the picture

This activity uses friendly competition to encourage sharp listening in quick reaction times. A good activity when students are getting tired or losing concentration.

The Planning

- a. Students sit opposite to each other in pairs, with pre-prepared words in between them, there should be no more than eight words, and students should look at them first to familiarize themselves.
- b. As they listen to a chosen dialogue, they have to slap the correct word when they hear it. Fastest slap wins a point! They can keep a tally as they go along to see who the winner is.

Whatever the activity, whatever the age or level, the most important thing is for students to stay engaged by being challenged, doing something new and having fun.

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