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English Qualifications

C2 Proficiency

Developing listening skills for
Cambridge English Qualifications:
A guide for teachers



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Who this guide is for

Just like official examiners, teachers also spend many hours evaluating learners' language skills. This guide is for you. With lots of practical tips and real examples, it will help you to develop your learners' listening skills in preparation for the Cambridge English C2 Proficiency qualification.

About C2 Proficiency

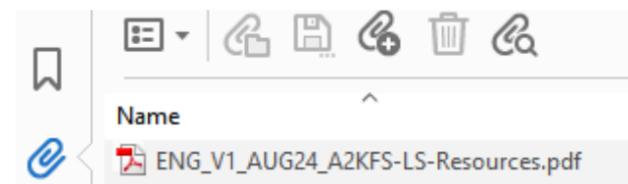
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tests reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, plus use of English ✓ Shows that learners can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study demanding subjects at the highest level, including postgraduate and PhD programmes • negotiate and persuade effectively at senior management level in international business settings • understand the main ideas of complex pieces of writing • talk about complex or sensitive issues, and deal confidently with difficult questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comes after C1 Advanced ✓ Tests learners at <u>CEFR Level C2</u> ✓ Can be taken on paper or on a computer |
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You can find out more about our C2 Proficiency qualification and other exams on our website. See cambridgeenglish.org/schools.

How to use this guide

To get the most from this guide:

- Try the practical ideas and reflect on how these techniques affect the processes of learning and teaching in your classroom.
- Open the attached **Resources pdf** and download the example exam tasks and resources in the guide.
- Discuss different approaches with learners in order to understand their preferences and needs, and to find out what approaches are most helpful to them.
- Reflect on your own listening skills, both in your first language and in any other languages that you speak. What do you find challenging? How do you overcome these challenges? Can you share any top tips with the learners in your own classroom?
- You can navigate the document by using the hyperlinks in the text and the buttons on each spread:



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There are also some other terms in this guide which are more widely used in the field of assessment. When these terms appear in this guide, you'll find an explanation nearby in a glossary box like this:

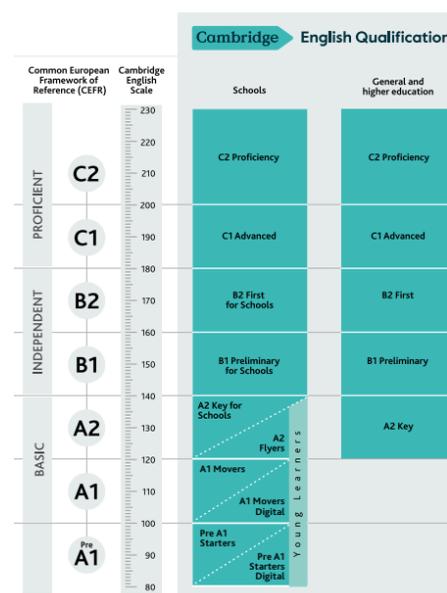


Key terminology

The **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)** is an international standard for describing language ability. It uses a six-point scale, from **A1** for beginners up to **C2** for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications.



CEFR scale





Key terminology

The study of listening is a specialist field and, like all specialist fields, there is some common terminology which might be unfamiliar or confusing. Learning to recognise these terms will help you to understand this guide, which will help you to develop your learners' listening skills.

What does effective listening involve?

When we achieve a very good level of listening in a particular language, we often forget how sophisticated this skill really is! The terms we use to describe the processes of listening are called sub-skills and they include:

Sub-skill	Definition	Example from everyday life	Which parts of the exam test this sub-skill?
Predicting	Thinking about what you are going to hear, based on what you know about the speaker, the topic and the context.	Your friend sends you a video from social media of an interview with a politician. You immediately think about other interviews you've seen with this person, what you already know about her latest campaign and what she might say about it in this interview.	Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4
Listening for gist	Understanding just the general topic of what you hear.	You are sitting in a park and you overhear friends talking. One of them is talking about a recent family event. You don't notice or remember all the details or words , but it sounds like it was a very happy event.	Parts 1, 3 and 4

Sub-skill	Definition	Example from everyday life	Which parts of the exam test this sub-skill?
Listening for key information	Identifying specific words or phrases in what you hear.	You are waiting at the train station, listening to the announcement with information about which platform to go to. You listen carefully because you don't want to go to the wrong platform and miss your train.	Part 2
Listening for detailed understanding	Understanding the content of what you hear in depth, especially the opinions and attitudes of the speaker(s).	You want to buy a friend a DVD for his birthday. You ask his girlfriend which films she would recommend, as she has similar taste and she'll also know if he's already seen them. You listen carefully to her explanation because you want to know her opinion before you make a choice.	Parts 1, 3 and 4

Expert listeners can bring these four sub-skills together when they listen, so they can **recognise** what they hear and **understand** the meaning.

For example, imagine we are listening to someone describing a recent experience and we recognise the word *Unbelievable!* Our ability to match the sounds to the word is called **bottom-up processing**.

But the word *unbelievable* doesn't tell us much about the person's recent experience. Why were they so shocked? How did they feel? Angry? Amused? Disappointed? To understand what the speaker *means* when they use this word, we need to listen for more information, we need to know the **context** and **co-text**. This is called **top-down processing**.

Process	Definition	Example from everyday life
Bottom-up processing = recognising what you hear	Recognising small units (sounds), building them up into bigger units (words) and then bigger ones (phrases). Sometimes called 'decoding'.	You ask someone for an address and they tell you it's number 60. You accurately identify the sounds and stress of the word <i>sixty</i> and don't mishear it as <i>sixteen</i> .
Top-down processing = understanding the meaning of what you hear	Using context (knowledge of the world) and co-text (what the speaker has said so far) to help you understand words that are not clear.	You're watching a fashion programme on TV. You think you hear someone talking about <i>string, summer, autumn</i> and <i>winter</i> . You doubt that you heard the first word correctly – you're not sure if <i>string</i> is a word in English, but you know that <i>spring</i> is a word. And you know that it makes sense when talking about other seasons. You also know that in the world of fashion, clothing is often categorised by season. You use this knowledge to make an educated guess: the person probably said <i>spring</i> , not <i>string</i> .

Listening strategies learners can use to help them understand

Expert listeners can automatically understand and interpret what someone is saying, but this can be very difficult for the learner, especially when their language level is low or if the context is unfamiliar. This means communication can break down so the learner might need to use different listening **strategies** to help them understand. For example:



Diego hears the key words *past*, *library*, *next* and *5 minutes* when he asks someone for directions. He **uses his knowledge of the world** and guesses that the speaker is telling him to continue walking for about 5 minutes and keep going when he passes the local library.



Mahtab knows about sports but only catches the words *team*, *lose*, *10* and *players*. She **uses her knowledge of the topic** to help her understand that the speaker is describing a football team who lost their match because they only had 10 players instead of 11.



Yinxuan isn't sure if the speaker said *a lot of fun* or *a lot of sun*. He **waits until the speaker has said a little bit more so he can check his ideas**, and one of these options suddenly makes more sense.



Jana hears a new word when her friend is talking: *I don't really like ??? but my dad says I should eat it because it's good for me!* She can **guess the meaning from the co-text** because her friend has been talking about healthy food.

Listening strategies like these help when the learner has difficulty understanding by working with what they were able to understand. Over time, the learner will become a more effective listener.



Key terminology

Some words have a strong form and a weak form. The **strong** form is how a word sounds when it's alone, with no other words around it. For example, the word *as* has the same vowel sound as the words *cat* and *man*. But small grammatical words like *as* are often difficult to hear in connected speech because the speaker puts more stress on words which carry more meaning, like nouns, verbs and adjectives. So words like *as* become **weak**, which means the word is not stressed and the vowel sound changes. This change can make the word more difficult to hear.



The challenges of listening in a second language

Listening can be difficult, even in our first language. It can be difficult to understand if someone is speaking quickly, or if they are using words we don't know, on an unfamiliar topic. Physical and environmental factors also make a difference: if we have hearing problems, if we can't see the speaker's face, if several people are speaking at the same time, or if there is a lot of background noise – all these things make it harder to understand what you hear. Listening in a different language can be even more difficult.

Challenges for the learner

In addition to the general challenges of listening, there are other factors which can affect learners' listening in a second language. Here are some of the challenges your learners are likely to face:

1. **Language level.** Do your learners have a wide knowledge of vocabulary, grammar or idioms?
2. **Awareness of pronunciation.** Can they recognise the words and structures they know when they hear them? Can they understand words and phrases in fast and fluent, connected speech?
3. **Experience and exposure to the language.** Are learners familiar with the speaker's accent? Have they heard it before? How is it similar to or different from their own accent?
4. **Knowledge of the topic.** Are learners listening to somebody talking about a specialist subject?
5. **Learner motivation.** Are learners interested in developing their skills in the second language? How confident are they about listening? Are they aware of their own strengths and weaknesses?

Challenges for the teacher

Teachers also have several practical challenges to manage:

1. **Time and space in the syllabus.** How much time do you have to develop learners' listening skills? How long is the course, and will the learners be able to see their progress over time? What are the learners' expectations?

2. **Access to resources.** What materials do you have? Do you have audio recordings with accompanying exercises? Are these suitable for the learners' level, the exam they're preparing for, improving their particular weaknesses, etc.?
3. **Giving feedback.** How can you give feedback to individual learners in a large class? What's the best way to give feedback? How can you make sure you're developing learners' ability to listen, and not just checking correct/incorrect answers?
4. **Technology.** What audio equipment do you have? Is the sound quality good enough for a large classroom? Are learners studying on their own devices? Are they using headphones? Are they studying online from home, perhaps with background noise, distractions or technology problems, which you can't control?

These are not complete lists, of course. Many teachers will be very familiar with the challenges mentioned here and can probably add a few more from their own experience!

The rest of this guide is designed to help you and your learners overcome these challenges and improve their listening skills. There are several practical activities, illustrated with examples from the Cambridge English C2 Proficiency exam.

★ Top tips for developing learners' listening skills

The long-term goal of a learner is to become so comfortable with the different listening **sub-skills** in their second language that these become automatic, just like in their first language. This is a bigger challenge than just preparing for an exam, but the exam can provide structure and focus which will help both learners and their teachers. Developing listening skills is about helping learners to notice and practise all the small things which effective listeners do, and to use strategies to help them while their general listening abilities are improving.

General advice

- ✓ **Do ...** practise **bottom-up decoding skills** frequently. The best way to make these processes easier and more automatic is to practise little and often over a long time. You can do this by checking and drilling pronunciation every time you teach new words or grammar, or through techniques like dictation and focused listening. See the **optional follow-up 1** to **Activity 2**, below, for an example of one way to practise bottom-up decoding skills.
- ✓ **Do ...** raise learners' awareness of how **top-down strategies** can help them understand more. You can practise these through techniques like using context to guess the meaning of unclear words.
- ✗ **Don't ...** focus *only* on meaning and language. It's also important to build learners' confidence in listening by praising their success and improving their self-awareness.

★ Top tips for developing learners' listening skills

- ✓ **Do ...** encourage learners to listen for pleasure. Listening doesn't always have to mean listening *practice*. It could mean learners sharing songs or podcasts that they enjoy, for example.
- ✓ **Do ...** take a healthy approach to exam practice. It's important to practise exam tasks formally sometimes, but don't make exam practice the only listening work you do. Treat listening lessons as an opportunity to help learners understand their own strengths and weaknesses and how to use strategies to improve their understanding.
- ✓ **Do ...** check learners' understanding thoroughly. In particular, ask them why wrong answers were wrong. Think about the pronunciation of the words they heard, discuss the distractors in the multiple-choice questions and work with the audioscript. See **Activities 1** and **3**, below, for examples of how to exploit the audioscript.

Before listening: preparing for the task

- ✓ **Do ...** make sure learners understand what they have to do in the exam task and how to avoid silly mistakes. For example, teach them how to prepare for a specific question, to underline or highlight key words, to read multiple-choice options carefully and to be aware of distractors, which are designed to make them really listen and think. See **Activity 3** for an example of how to analyse exam questions carefully.
- ✗ **Don't ...** just press *play* with no time to prepare. It's important to spend some time on pre-listening tasks so that learners are ready to listen. All four **activities** include ideas on how to generate interest in the task and topic before listening.
- ✓ **Do ...** check the technology works before class. It's also helpful to have equipment which allows you to rewind just a few seconds so you can easily find and re-play the same very short section several times in a row.

While listening: how to conduct listening tasks

- ✓ **Do ...** stay quiet while learners listen. Make sure they aren't distracted by your voice, by other learners or by background noise (if possible). After you press *play*, just let them listen and concentrate on the task.
- ✓ **Do ...** wait a moment for learners to finish thinking and writing after you stop the recording. Don't press stop and then immediately begin speaking – this will quickly make learners forget what they just heard and focus on what you're saying instead.

★ Top tips for developing learners' listening skills

- ✗ **Don't ...** forget to **check** learners' predictions! When practising this sub-skill, it's important that learners have the chance to compare their first ideas with what they hear the next time they listen. This will help reveal any problems learners have with understanding, and help to identify what they need to practise to improve. See the **activities** for examples of using pre-listening stages to make and check predictions.
- ✗ **Don't ...** interrupt a listening to check learners' pre-listening predictions. After the whole recording is finished, you can ask learners to compare and explain their predictions before you confirm if they were right.

After listening: how to check understanding

- ✓ **Do ...** allow enough time for feedback, especially when deeper understanding is needed. It's especially important for learners to understand why wrong answers are wrong, and sometimes discussion about just one answer can take several minutes or require several opportunities to listen again.
- ✗ **Don't ...** simply accept the first answer that somebody offers in class. Often the strongest learner will answer, which can mean the class moves at the pace of the most able learner.
- ✓ **Do ...** take a range of answers from different learners before confirming which is correct. Ask several learners for their ideas, ask if they agree with each other, then play the recording again so they can listen and check their ideas. Finally, ask them if anyone wants to change their original answer before you confirm which is correct.
- ✗ **Don't ...** ask pupils to report how many answers they got right in the exercise. This doesn't tell you what specifically they are finding difficult and it can be very demotivating. It can also be embarrassing for a learner who found a task much harder than their peers.
- ✓ **Do ...** give learners the chance to compare their answers in pairs before you ask them what they wrote or chose. This can help learners who may not be very strong at listening, or if they are less confident. They won't feel so shy about sharing their ideas with the rest of the class.
- ✓ **Do ...** ask learners to justify their choices before you confirm which is correct. For example, ask what they heard that helped them to decide on the correct answer, or ask them to explain why one option is possible and another is impossible. See **Activities 2** and **4** for an example of using feedback stages to explore learners' answer choices.
- ✓ **Do ...** experiment with tools like **Kahoot!** or mini-whiteboards in order to get a whole-class view of the choices that learners made. This also avoids making learners who made an incorrect choice feel uncomfortable.

Preparing learners for the C2 Proficiency Listening paper

The texts and tasks in Cambridge English Qualifications are designed to reflect real-world communication and to test learners' true abilities in English, so preparing learners for the Listening paper for our qualification shouldn't be very different from developing and assessing their listening skills in general. But of course, the tasks, assessment focus and timings for an exam are very specific and learners should have plenty of practice before they take the real exam.

To prepare for the C2 Proficiency exam, learners will benefit from:

- plenty of practice, in class and at home, of listening to the kinds of formal and informal texts they will hear in the exam, including interviews, discussions, conversations, radio plays, talks, speeches, lectures, commentaries, documentaries and instructions
- plenty of opportunities to hear different varieties and accents of English, different styles of speaking and speakers of different ages and backgrounds. There are many freely available sources online, such as any online news services in English
- chances to practise exam tasks under timed conditions, just like in the real exam
- participating in regular classroom discussion activities in English
- making sure they can write clearly on the answer sheet so that examiners can read their answers easily.

They also need to understand:

- what they need to do in each task in the Listening paper
- the role of distractors in the exam and how these can lead to wrong answers
- their own strengths and weaknesses when listening
- how they can improve any areas of weakness
- what strategies they can use to overcome doubts or make intelligent guesses if they don't understand certain words or phrases that they hear.

★ Top tips

After doing practice tasks, get learners to record their results and their feelings in a personal learning diary. They should say what they did well and what they found more difficult. Then they can refer back to these notes later in their course in order to see their improvement and consider anything that they still find challenging.

How the exam is assessed

The C2 Proficiency Listening paper has four parts and lasts for about 40 minutes in total, plus 5 minutes for candidates to transfer their answers to the answer sheet (if they're taking the paper-based test). Every audio recording in the exam is played twice.

	Task format	What the learner has to do	Which listening skills are being tested
Part 1	6 questions, each with 3 multiple-choice options	Listen to three short, unrelated recordings of either monologues or interacting speakers. Choose the correct option for each question. Each dialogue lasts about 1 minute and has two questions.	Listening for gist, detail, function, purpose, topic, speaker, feeling, attitude, opinion, etc.
Part 2	9 sentences, each with 1 gap to fill	Listen to a monologue (about 3–4 minutes) and complete the gaps in nine sentences with information from the recording.	Listening for detail and stated opinion
Part 3	5 questions, each with 4 multiple-choice options	Listen to an interview or exchange between two or more speakers (about 4 minutes) and identify attitudes, opinions, feelings, speaker purpose, function or main ideas.	Listening for gist, opinion, inference, agreement and detailed understanding
Part 4	2 tasks. Each task has 5 questions and 8 multiple-choice options.	Listen to five, short, related monologues (about 35 seconds each) and choose the two correct options for each speaker.	Listening for gist, attitude, main points and interpreting context

Important note: The example exam tasks used in this guide are provided to give you and your learners an idea of the format of the exam and what is being tested in each part. The tasks have not been fully pretested and calibrated like our published exams. To assess your learners' readiness for a live exam use one of the official sample tests on [cambridgeenglish.org](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org), or one of our official [practice tests](#). Go to our [Mock Test Toolkit](#) for tips on using sample tests.

★ Top tips

Part 2 is the only part which requires learners to do more than choose an option from the multiple-choice list. In Part 2, they must complete a gap with something they heard in the recording. When practising Part 2, make sure learners check each question carefully by highlighting key words. They should think about the grammar and context to help them have an idea about the type of word to listen for. For example, here the gap falls within the structure *to name [something] as [something]*, so it requires a noun phrase that will correspond with the noun phrase on the other side of the gap.

Marian quotes a Brazilian study which names **(1)** as the most valid factor.





Part 1: Task familiarisation

It's helpful to check with learners what they know and can remember about the format of this part of the exam when you are preparing in class. Here are some questions you can ask your learners. You can either check them with learners before you start this activity, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best for your learners.

- How many recordings will you hear? (*Three*)
- How many questions are there for each recording? (*Two*)
- How many options are there for each question? (*Three*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the question carefully and think about the topic. Highlight any key words in the task and think about other words speakers might use to express the same ideas.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen for the general ideas expressed by the speakers and try to choose one option for each question.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Check the options you chose and make a final choice.*)



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Aims: To practise predicting content and language before listening; to practise listening for attitudes or opinions that are implied.

Also useful for: Part 3, Part 4 and (optional follow-up activity) Writing Part 2.

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and download the example exam task for Part 1. Make copies of the task and of the clean audioscript, for your learners. Check the annotated audioscript in the guide and be prepared for when the correct or incorrect answers appear in the recording.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Raise learners' interest, and read the introductory sentence of the Part 1 question: *You hear two radio presenters introducing a programme about the sounds of the rainforest.*
2. Encourage learners to use their general knowledge of the world and their imaginations to predict ideas and language that might appear in the recording.
3. Now read the stem of the first of the two Part 1 questions: *What does the woman imply by equating rainforest sounds with a newsroom?*
For example, in this recording, the question mentions *a newsroom* and at one point the speaker says: *Think of a busy newspaper office ...* Ask the whole class, opening a discussion in response to these questions:
 - What sort of environment is a busy newspaper office? Picture it: what can you see? What can you hear? Is it bright/dark? Quiet/loud? Energetic/calm? Full of people/empty?
 - Who works there? What do they do? What do they talk about?
 - Imagine you overhear a conversation. What are the people saying?

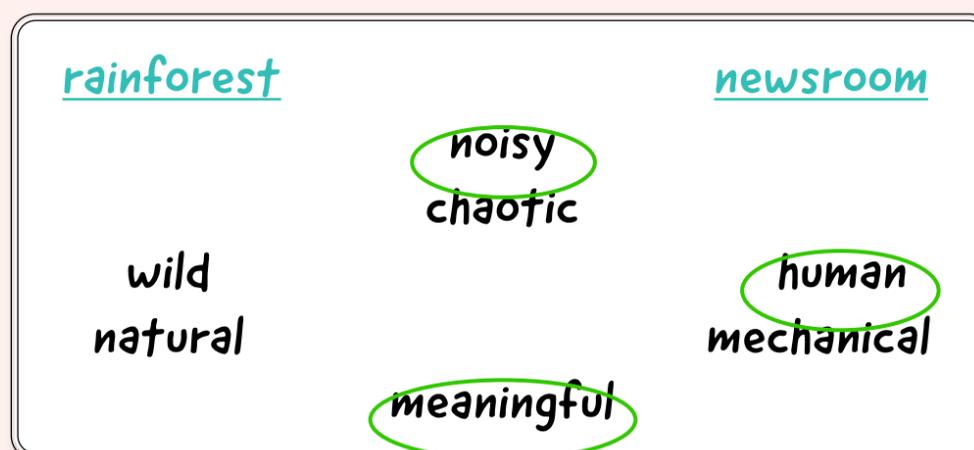
Activity 1: Listening Part 1

- Now surprise learners: tell them they should compare this imagined setting to a rainforest. Divide the class in two. Ask half the class to imagine how the settings are similar and the other half to imagine how they're different. They should focus on what these environments *sound* like.
- Collect some ideas and take notes on the board, indicating areas of commonality and difference. Arrange the board like this:



Listening 1

- Tell learners they are now going to hear the recording with the two radio presenters introducing a programme about sounds of the rainforest. They should check the predictions they made in their earlier discussion. Play the **recording**.
- Give learners a moment to compare their ideas, then return to the brainstorm on the board, and add any new words that they heard. Invite learners to circle any ideas or words from their discussion that they also heard in the recording, for example:



★ Top tip

When planning your lesson, take inspiration from the content of the recording. Avoid simply practising exam tasks one by one – try to activate learners' creativity and imagination by taking things 'off the page'.

★ Top tip

There are no 'correct' answers at this stage – all learners' ideas have a place on the board of predictions. These will help them focus and relate to the context and content of the recording they are about to hear.



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

8. Check learners have understood the gist of the recording: Is the woman saying the two environments are similar or different? (**Answer:** *similar.*)
9. Now give learners the full task for **Activity 1** – the question with the three multiple-choice options. Check learners understand the phrasing of the question:
 - Which word indicates that the woman thinks the two environments are similar? (**Answer:** *equating.*)
 - Will she explain her reasons for this belief explicitly? (**Answer:** No, they're implied.)
10. Give learners a moment to read the task, highlight key words and choose the multiple-choice option they think is correct.
11. Let learners compare their choices with a partner and explain their reasoning.



Listening 2

12. Play the **recording** again so they can check their answers.

13. Confirm the correct option (**C**).



Exam strategy

Learners should read the introductory sentence carefully, as this gives useful contextual information. They should look for key words in the question that indicate what they're listening for, such as an attitude or an opinion about a particular point mentioned in the recording.



Exam strategy

Encourage learners to mark one answer to each question at the end of the first listening, even if they're not sure it is correct. Learners can listen and check their answers when they listen for the second time.



Exam strategy

Listening to a recording once without looking at the multiple-choice options in an exam task can help learners to pay attention to what they hear, and to not be too guided or distracted by the options. First, encourage learners to predict what they might hear, then let them listen to check their predictions. After they've tried to answer the questions this way, you can show them the multiple-choice options and see if they find it easier to select the right one.



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

After listening

14. Put learners into small groups and give them time to discuss all three multiple-choice options: Can they explain why the other two options are wrong?
15. Give learners a copy of the **audioscript** for this question. In pairs, they should annotate the script and discuss:
- Which words indicate the right answer?
 - Which words are potentially distracting?

Answer key for Listening Part 1 Question 1

You hear two radio presenters introducing a programme about the sounds of the rainforest. What does the woman imply by equating rainforest sounds with a newsroom?

- ✗ **A** There is nothing frightening about the forest.
- ✗ **B** Animal noises may resemble human voices.
- ✓ **C** Meaningful communication is taking place.

Annotated audioscript

Man: So, let's imagine it's dusk in the rainforest. In the creek, a male toad makes his first, **tentative** call. He's joined by dozens of his kind and then several treefrogs set up in competition ...

Woman: Mmm, **to a human listener**, the multitude of different sounds represents a **bewildering** variety of squeaks, chirrups and whistles. So how does any animal make sense of the diverse bombardment of sound? Well, think of a busy newspaper office, with the editor shouting instructions, the office manager dealing with two phone calls at once, and everyone swapping stories around the water cooler. The rainforest is little different.

Teacher notes

The word *tentative* can sometimes suggest someone is *frightened*. This could be potentially *distracting* if a learner noticed the related word *frightening* in option A, but they refer to different things (the person who feels afraid and the source of that fear, respectively).

- ✗ Option **A** is a wrong answer.

The word *human* also appears in option B, which could be *distracting*. Similarly, the word *bewildering* is similar to *frightening*, which appears in option A. In fact, the words used here may be similar but the ideas expressed are unrelated.

- ✗ Option **A** and **B** are wrong answers.



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Annotated audioscript (continued)

Man: How do you mean?

Woman: Well, the toad's call **tells others of his species** **that** he's an adult – an older, larger male with a deep voice. **It conveys** other information too. He's energised, so he's **obviously** found a few insects to consume. And he's macho enough to defend his spot and attract females. He then **alters his call as a direct challenge** to an approaching rival – turns it into a 'keep away, this is my bit of creek!' sound.

Man: ... **nothing subtle** about that!

Woman: *[laughs]* Indeed not ...

Teacher notes (continued)

The verbs *tell* and *convey* refer to communication of meaning, and the expression *as a direct challenge* shows that the way the toad *alters his call* can be interpreted as having a particular meaning (that of challenging). The woman also states that the energy in the toad's call has an *obvious* meaning.

✓ Option **C** is the correct answer.

The man's use of *nothing subtle* is similar to the structure *nothing frightening* in option A. This could be potentially distracting if a learner doesn't know that the two adjectives are not synonyms.



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Steps for Question 2

Refer learners to the second question that goes with this recording: *What will other toads learn from the call of the toad in the creek?* Don't spend time preparing with them. Give them just a few minutes to follow the same steps on their own, like they would in the exam:

1. Learners read the introductory sentence for Question 2 and predict what ideas and language they might hear.
2. Learners read the three multiple-choice options and again predict ideas and language they might hear.
3. Play the recording. Learners complete the task.
4. In pairs, learners compare and justify their choices.
5. Confirm the right answer. Refer to the audioscript as necessary.

Answer key for Listening Part 1 Question 2

What will other toads learn from the call of the toad in the creek?

- ✗ **A** That he is positioned in a prime location.
- ✗ **B** That he is ready to fend off attackers.
- ✓ **C** That he has found a plentiful supply of food.

★ Top tip

Remind learners that they need to listen to the whole extract carefully before choosing their answers and that they should not be too quick to assume that they have heard the correct answer.

← Optional follow-up

Set learners an article-writing task in the style of Writing Part 2, either for homework or as a collaborative writing activity in class. Check the **resources** for the guide and make copies of the Activity 1 optional follow-up (Writing Part 2: article). You could also use a similar activity from **Assessing writing for Cambridge English Qualifications: A guide for teachers**.





Part 2: Task familiarisation

Remember to check what learners know and can remember about the format of this part of the exam when you are preparing in class. Here are some helpful questions you can ask them. You can either go through the questions with learners before you start this activity, or at another point in the lesson that you feel works best for your learners.

- How many sentences are there? (*Nine*)
- How many gaps are there? (*Nine*)
- Do the answers appear in the recording in the same order as in the task? (*Yes.*)
- In this part of the Listening paper, how many words can go in each gap? (*Up to three, but usually just one or two.*)
- What kinds of words go in the gaps? (*Usually things which give concrete information, often nouns or proper nouns.*)
- Should you change the words you hear to fill in the gaps? (*No. This task doesn't test learners' ability to paraphrase – they should simply write the actual words they hear.*)



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Aims: To review and practise the format of Part 2.

Also useful for: Reading and Use of English Part 4 key word transformations.

Preparation and equipment: Identify 3–5 samples of different genres of music to play in class. Open the **resources** for the guide and download the example exam task, complete audioscript and the extract from the audioscript. Make copies of the task for learners. Read the annotated answer key and audioscript, and listen to the recording so you're prepared for when the correct or incorrect answers appear in the recording.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. The topic of this recording is music and research. Start by generating interest with a whole-class discussion by playing the students a few clips of different types of music and asking them to respond:
 - How does each clip make them feel?
 - Which clip(s) do they prefer? Why?
 - What do they know (or think) about the relationship between music and personality, or between music and intelligence?

Follow up the last discussion question by asking the class: What would they *like* to know about these connections that they don't already know? If they had the chance to learn from a researcher in this area, which two questions would they ask them? Encourage an open exchange of ideas between learners across the class.

★ Top tip

It's important that learners use pre-listening preparation time wisely. One way of doing this is to give them pre-listening discussion tasks in the classroom. The task should naturally elicit vocabulary and other language features associated with the topic and context.



Exam strategy

Make your learners aware of how much they bring to a listening task from their own experience and world knowledge. Remind them they should balance this with what they hear in the recording. Encourage them to make predictions based on the information provided in the instructions about the speaker, topic and context. They can use this information to help them tune into the text quickly when they hear it.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2



Listening 1

2. Tell learners they're going to listen to a researcher called Marian Forster giving a presentation about some research findings. Learners should listen and see if the speaker answers the two questions they came up with in the pre-listening discussion.
3. Play the **recording**.
4. Take whole class feedback and check whether the speaker addressed any of their pre-listening questions.



Listening 2

5. Write the following brief prompts on the board, or dictate them to learners. They relate to the focus of several questions from the Part 2 task:
 - Cognitive ability (the brain and intelligence)
 - Concentration
 - Personality
 - Musical tastes
6. Tell learners they will now hear the second part of the recording. As they listen, they should take brief notes of what the speaker says about each of the points listed in step 5. Play the second part of the **recording**.
7. After listening, learners write one short sentence for each of the points, summarising what they heard. Let them do this alone first, before comparing notes with a partner.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2



Listening 3

8. Now give learners copies of the **Activity 2** Listening Part 2 task. Give them a moment to read the sentences carefully and complete the gaps. Based on their previous opportunities to listen to the **recording** and to summarise what they heard, they should find this quite straightforward.



Top tip

Many questions in the C2 Proficiency exam are based on learners' ability to recognise a sentence which summarises the main meaning, attitude or opinion expressed by a speaker. Activities like this, where learners have to summarise what they heard, can provide them with valuable practice of these listening sub-skills.



Top tip

Answers to questions in Part 2 are short and require single words or noun groups and usually no more than three words. At C2 Proficiency level, these answers must all be spelled correctly to fit into the grammatical structure of the sentence. Candidates should use the words they hear on the recording.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Exam task

Part 2

You will hear a music student called Marian Forster giving a presentation about some research findings.

Complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

Marian quotes a Brazilian study which names **(1)** as the most valid factor in connecting music with cognitive ability.

A report into concentration claims that listening to certain musical genres can enhance people's ability to identify **(2)**

Some British research into music and personality suggests it is **(3)** who favour loud pop music.

A Russian study points out the importance of **(4)** in determining an individual's musical tastes.



Listening 4

9. Allow learners to compare their ideas with a partner before playing the **recording** one final time for learners to check their answers. Project or share copies of the annotated task to guide learners as they compare and check answers in pairs.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Annotated task

Marian quotes a Brazilian study which names **personal enjoyment** as the **most valid factor** in connecting music with cognitive ability.

- The structure *to name [something] as [something]* requires two nouns which match in number.
- The **second noun** is singular.
- So the gap must be filled with another singular noun phrase.

A report into concentration claims that listening to certain musical genres can enhance people's ability **to identify visual images**.

- The verb **to identify** can be followed by an object (*to identify something*) or by a complement (*to identify as something/someone*).
- If followed by an object, this could be a plural noun, an uncountable noun or a singular noun (used with an article).

Some British research into music and personality suggests it is **extroverts who** favour loud pop music.

- The relative pronoun **who** means the preceding word must be a person or type of person.
- The verb *to favour* is used here after the relative pronoun *who* but without third-person -s, so its subject must be plural.

A Russian study points out **the importance of social identity** in determining an individual's musical tastes.

- The phrase **the importance of [something]** requires a noun.
- This noun could be a plural noun, an uncountable noun or a singular noun (used with an article).

10. After listening, ask learners to confirm the correct answer for each gap. If possible, project the task on the board or (if teaching online) share it on your screen, so you can complete the gaps together. As you work through each answer with the class, it may help to refer to the annotated task. Draw learners' attention to the grammatical features on both sides of the gaps so they can be sure their answers are grammatically correct.

Answer key

Question	Answer
1	personal enjoyment
2	(visual) images visuals

Question	Answer
3	(the) extroverts (the) extraverts
4	social identity



Exam strategy

When learners think they've heard an answer, they should write it down carefully and check the grammar is accurate according to what appears before and after the gap. For example, if they don't hear clearly whether a word is singular or plural, they should check the rest of the sentence to see which form is appropriate.



Top tip

Remind learners to write their answers for Part 2 very clearly in CAPITAL LETTERS so that it's easy to read their handwriting.



Optional follow-up 1

This activity practises bottom-up decoding skills in class:

1. Play this short **extract** from the recording, which features rapid, connected speech:
and not so much Mozart or any particular composer
2. After completing the listening task, tell the learners you're going to focus on the pronunciation of connected speech in the recording.
3. They should listen to the extract you play them and count the number of words they hear (up to a maximum of 10 words).
4. Give learners a gapped sentence, including a few words before and after, to help them identify which section they're listening for. Here's an example from the task in Activity 2, above:

*They said that the overriding criterion was
what they termed 'personal enjoyment'
_____ composer.*

Answer (completed sentence):

They said that the overriding criterion was what they termed 'personal enjoyment' **and not so much Mozart or any particular composer.** [8 words]

5. Play the **extract**. You may need to play it several times. Let learners focus and use their fingers to count while they think.
6. When they feel ready, tell learners to write down what they heard and count how many words there were.
7. Put learners in pairs to compare their answers, then invite one pair to confirm the correct answer.
8. Write the complete phrase/sentence on the board and invite learners to mark which words are stressed (**answer for this example: not, Mozart, any, particular**) and what type of words these are (**answer for this example: negatives like not or any, proper nouns and adjectives**).
9. Ask learners to identify why we don't hear the other words very clearly (**answer: because they're not stressed**). Get them to practise repeating the complete phrase with the same rhythm.

★ Top tip

In Part 2, it's important that learners hear and write down the exact words used in the recording. You can help them improve their ability to recognise specific individual words by practising bottom-up decoding skills in class.



Optional follow-up 2

1. Tell learners they're going to use these sentences to practise paraphrasing skills for Reading and Use of English Part 4 (key word transformations).
2. Put learners in pairs and give them synonyms and gapped sentences from the **resources** for each of the questions they just saw in Listening Part 2. The first example is shown here:

1. A Brazilian study names personal enjoyment as the most valid factor in connecting music with cognitive ability.

found

Personal enjoyment the most valid factor
in connecting music with cognitive ability.

3. They must work together to rewrite each sentence, filling the gaps with between three and eight words (including the key word given).
4. Mix the pairs so learners are now working with a new partner. Get them to compare their answers and make any necessary changes, for example to make their answers grammatically accurate.
5. Check answers as a whole class.

★ Top tip

Several parts of the exam use different words than the recording, so learners need plenty of exposure to, and practice of, language for paraphrasing and reporting. This follow-up activity focuses particularly on reporting verbs.



Part 3: Task familiarisation

Make time in class to check what learners know and can remember about the format of this part of the exam. Here are some helpful questions you can ask them. You can either check understanding about the exam before you start this activity, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best for your learners, for example at the end of the lesson as a quick review after practising the listening tasks.

- How many speakers are there? (*Two, sometimes more*)
- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- How many multiple-choice options are there for each question? (*Four*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen for the general ideas expressed by the speakers and try to choose one option for each question.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Check the options you chose and make a final choice.*)



Activity 3: Listening Part 3

Aims: To practise identifying speakers' attitudes and opinions when these are not stated explicitly.

Also useful for: Listening Part 1, Listening Part 4, Speaking Part 3 (optional follow-up activity) and Use of English Part 2 (open cloze).

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and download the example exam task, the clean audioscript and annotated audioscript. Make copies of the discussion questions, exam task and clean audioscript for learners. Check the annotated audioscript and be prepared to discuss how the correct or incorrect answers appear in the recording.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Raise learners' interest in the topic of the question (in this example, the cost of tickets for football or soccer). Hand out the discussion questions from the **resources**. Put learners in small groups to discuss the following:
 - What do you know about the cost of tickets for sports matches?
 - Has live sport always been expensive to watch? How and why has the cost changed over the years?
 - Where does this money go? Do you feel it's well spent?
 - If you're a fan of watching live sport, do you think it's value for money? Why/why not?
 - If you're not a sports fan, why do you think other people are prepared to spend so much on this leisure pursuit?
 - What's the impact of the high cost of tickets – on fans, on clubs, on wider society?



Top tip

The range of topics that could appear in the C2 Proficiency exam is very wide. This reflects the expectation that learners at this level should be able to deal with communication on many topics even if they don't personally have a lot of knowledge or interest in those topics. This activity provides a good opportunity for learners to practise expressing and justifying their opinions, which is particularly relevant to Part 3 of the Speaking paper but also provides relevant practice for listening. Learners should be encouraged to contribute as best they can, even if they're initially unsure about the topic.



Activity 3: Listening Part 3



Listening 1

2. Tell learners they are now going to hear an extract from a recording for Part 3. They will hear a discussion between two football supporters, James and Sarah, about professional football and the cost of tickets to matches. Ask learners to listen and compare what the speakers say with the ideas from their own discussion. Play the **recording**.
3. Feedback. Ask learners if either of the speakers expressed a view similar to their own or their classmates, based on the previous discussion.
4. Write the stem of the question on the board, without the multiple-choice options:

What do they agree on about the problem of high ticket prices for matches?

The aim is to encourage learners to listen for key information in the recording; you don't want them to be distracted by the multiple-choice options.

5. Ask what they can remember about the problem of high ticket prices. Accept a range of answers from the class.



Listening 2

6. Play the **recording** again. Learners listen and check if they remembered accurately how the speakers felt about the high cost of tickets to football matches.
7. Ask learners to discuss with a partner and to write down a short, specific answer to this question in around 10 words, which is around the same number of words as a multiple-choice option.



Listening 3

8. Play the **recording** a third time. Learners listen, and compare their answers with the ideas in the recording.
9. Ask learners if they want to make any changes to their answers now they have listened again.
10. Put pairs together to form small groups. They should compare their suggested answers and agree on the best answer to the original question prompt. Take a selection of answers from the class.
11. Now give learners the Activity 3 Listening Part 3 question with multiple-choice options from the **resources**. Give learners a moment to compare the answers they wrote after Listening 1 and 2 and decide which they think is the correct multiple-choice option.



Activity 3: Listening Part 3

After-listening analysis

12. Take feedback from the class and ask learners to explain the reasons for their choices before confirming the correct answer:

D It is a reflection of how the status of the game has risen.

13. Give learners time to review the four multiple-choice options to discuss in their groups: Can they explain why the other three options are wrong?

14. Give learners a copy of the audioscript for this question. In pairs, they should annotate the script and discuss the following:

- Which words indicate the **right** answer?
- Which words are potentially **distracting**?

Do the speakers explicitly say 'I agree'? (*No – so how is their agreement expressed?*)

15. Take whole-class feedback and for more information, refer to the annotated audioscript with teacher notes in the **resources**.



Exam strategy

It is useful for students to work with texts where opinions are implied rather than stated explicitly and to practise 'listening between the lines'. It helps to analyse the audioscript.

For example, in this task notice James says *no*, when in fact he is in agreement with the view that Sarah expressed above, adding that higher prices don't impact significantly on demand for tickets.

No, now it's all TV deals and astronomical transfer fees. But **when prices go up**, **demand from fans still only dips slightly**.



Optional follow-ups

Discussion. Do they agree with the speakers? Are high ticket prices a reflection of the status of high-profile sports events, or a reflection of something else? Will there ever be a point where sports fans will no longer accept the status quo? Can they identify any possible solutions?

Open cloze task. Give learners the optional open cloze task supplied in the **resources**. It is an adapted version of the audioscript with eight words removed, such as prepositions, articles, negatives and other small functional elements that feature in common lexical and grammatical patterns or fixed expressions.





Part 4: Task familiarisation

Remember to check what learners know and can remember about the format of this part of the exam when you are preparing in class. Make time in class for task familiarisation, particularly before they attempt Part 4 for the first time. This can be achieved by sharing and **analysing the task** as it appears in the exam.

1. Distribute the Activity 4 Listening Part 4 task familiarisation discussion from the **resources**. Learners work in pairs to review the task and discuss the questions.
2. Take whole-class feedback and elicit answers.
 - How many tasks are there? (*Two*)
 - How many speakers will you hear in each task? (*Five*)
 - How many extracts will you hear? (*Five*)
 - How many multiple-choice options are there in each task? (*Eight*)
 - So how many extra options are there, which do not match to any recording? (*Three per task.*)
 - What strategies can you use, or are you aware of, for the Part 4 task? (*See exam strategy box.*)
3. Share the Listening Part 4 exam strategies box with learners from the **resources**. If possible, project this on to the board.
4. Discuss each strategy in turn.
 - Draw learners' attention to the differences. Ask them to compare and contrast the strategies.
 - Ask them which they feel is the most and the least challenging and why.
 - If learners have tried Part 4 before, how did they approach it, and did they try either of these strategies before? Ask them for feedback.
5. Explain that in Activity 4 they will practise Part 4 in stages. They will start with Task two as a first step. Trying each task on its own will give learners the opportunity to understand Part 4. They should practise and try strategy A before attempting both Task one and Task two at the same time (strategy B).



Activity 4: Listening Part 4

Aims: To practise a strategy for approaching Listening Part 4; to analyse the audioscript for language expressing attitude and opinion.

Also useful for: Speaking skills and Writing Part 1 (optional follow-up activity).

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and download the discussion questions, the example exam task, exam strategies box, the complete script, and script for Speaker 3. In this activity learners practise with Task two, and then follow on with Task one. Make copies all the materials you need for the different steps in Activity 4. Read the annotated audioscript and be prepared for when the correct or incorrect answers appear in the recording.



Exam strategies

Strategy A

1. Highlight key words in the questions for both Tasks one and two.
2. Use the first listening to do one of the tasks.
3. Use the second listening to do the other task.

Strategy B

1. Highlight key words in the questions for both tasks.
2. Use the first listening to do both Tasks one and two.
3. Use the second listening to check answers.

Additional information

Research shows that different candidates approach this task in different ways.

Avoid imposing one strategy on your learners. Classroom activities could focus on helping learners to identify which method works best for them.

Regardless of the strategy learners use in Part 4, they should always be encouraged to think about the theme of the recordings before they listen. They should think about the kinds of attitudes and ideas that they expect to hear, as well as any relevant vocabulary.



Adaptation

For learners who don't need extra support, or if you teach the same learners over a long period of time, you can gradually increase the level of challenge for the Part 4 tasks:

least challenging



most challenging

Use only one task, with only the five correct multiple-choice options (as suggested here with Task two).

Use both tasks instead of only Task two, and only give learners the five correct multiple-choice options for both of the tasks.

Give learners all eight options for one of the tasks.

Give learners all eight options for both of the tasks.



Activity 4: Listening Part 4

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Before listening, generate interest in the theme of the recording: the abilities needed for different types of work. Write the following on the board:

dealing with confrontation
organising a team
taking significant responsibility
recovering from failure
facing difficult physical conditions

2. Ask learners to think of examples of jobs that require these abilities. Accept some examples that learners come up with and write them on the board next to the abilities.
3. Give learners the 'Prepare to listen' discussion questions from the **resources**. Divide the class into pairs or small groups to stimulate lively discussion.
4. Take whole-class feedback. How similar or different are their ideas? Ask whether they agreed or disagreed with one another in their discussion.



Listening 1

5. Tell learners as they listen to the recording, they should compare what the speakers say with the ideas from their discussion before listening and make notes. Play the **recording**.
6. Take whole-class feedback – ask learners if they heard any of the ideas from their discussion. If so, which speaker(s) mentioned these?



Listening 2

7. Learners now listen and practise Task two. It's been simplified so they start by listening and matching the five speakers to the five options they discussed in the 'Prepare to listen' stage (rather than the eight options for the exam).
8. Give learners Activity 4: Listening 4 Task two adaptation (with five options) from the **resources**. Stronger learners can try Activity 4: Listening 4 Task two (with eight options), which is set out as it would be in the exam.
9. Play the **recording** again. Learners only need to write the numbers 1–5 against each option.
10. Put learners in pairs to compare their answers. If they disagree, they should justify their answer to their partner with reference to what they heard in the recording.



Top tip

Remind learners that they should not choose an option simply because they hear the same word or phrase in the recording. They should listen for the same *idea*.

★ Top tip

When learners first practise this task, it's not important to follow the exact layout of the exam task – they can simply write the number of each speaker next to the correct multiple-choice option as they listen. They might also find this approach helpful in the real exam – just remind them to be careful to transfer their answers accurately onto the answer sheet.

Activity 4: Listening Part 4

Listening 3

11. Play the **recording** again so learners can check any answers they disagreed about.
12. Take whole-class feedback to confirm answers by going through the options. Encourage learners to explain the reasons for their choices. Check the answers using the answer key in the **resources**.

After listening

13. This step is an opportunity for learners to listen and focus on one speaker and analyse the audioscript, looking for evidence to support their answer. This is also an opportunity to identify the distractors in the audioscript.

Listening 4

14. Ask learners to work in pairs. Play the **recording** and give them the 'after-listening audioscript' for Speaker 3 from the **resources**. They should highlight the parts that indicate the correct answer and underline any parts which are distracting.
15. Ask learners to identify and highlight any useful language used by the speaker to express an attitude or opinion. They should record this in their notebooks as useful reference for later productive tasks (such as the follow-up writing or speaking activity ideas, below).

Optional follow-up 1

Listening Part 4 Task one

Once learners have completed Task two, they should now have sufficient information to practise Task one, which is supplied in the **resources** with the answer key. Play the **recording** again. For this task they will have less teacher support. Taking each task in turn gives learners the time in class to discuss, reflect and practise analysing the questions, before listening.



Activity 4: Listening Part 4

After-listening annotated audioscript and answer key for Speaker 3

Green highlighting shows where the correct answer is given. Underlining shows where the listener can be distracted. **Yellow highlighting** shows language to express attitude or opinion.

Speaker 3: Option B – dealing with confrontation

Annotated audioscript (Speaker 3)

I'm a forensic scientist, and I specialise in DNA analysis. Some of my work involves working at the crime scene and, **of course**, you can be called out at any time of the day or night for that. But I spend most of my time in the lab with the rest of my team analysing evidence. Every case presents new challenges so you never **get stuck** in stuff that's **run-of-the-mill**. And there are non-scientific skills involved, like interpreting evidence to laypeople such as jurors if the case goes to court, and being able to stand up to quite hostile cross-questioning from lawyers. **It's no good if** you can't handle that, and some people find it very difficult.

Teacher notes

Learners might infer that a crime scene is an example of *difficult physical conditions* (option H).

Learners might hear the word *team* and automatically select option C.

Stand up to quite hostile cross-questioning is synonymous with *deal with confrontation*. *Handle* is synonymous with *deal with*, and *that* refers back to the *hostile cross-questioning*.

Learners might hear the word *difficult* and automatically select option H.

Suggested useful **language** for expressing attitude or opinion

<i>of course ...</i>	This indicates that Speaker 3 thinks this is an obvious or typical part of her job, which the listener probably won't find surprising.
<i>get stuck</i>	This contrasts with the <i>new challenges</i> mentioned earlier in the sentence, suggesting that Speaker 3 enjoys being challenged.
<i>run-of-the-mill</i>	This describes something boring, mundane, not enjoyable. This is referred to as something you might <i>get stuck in</i> and contrasts with the <i>new challenges</i> mentioned earlier in the sentence, suggesting that Speaker 3 enjoys being challenged.
<i>It's no good if ...</i>	Speaker 3 uses this to introduce her opinion that the following thing is not advisable for people who want a career like hers.



Optional follow-up 2

Activity 4 Listening Part 4

Discussion

To give learners more spoken practice of expressing attitudes and feelings on the same topic as the listening text, do a discussion activity. Discussion questions are supplied in the **resources**.

1. Put learners into pairs or small groups and give them questions to discuss linked to the main themes in the recording, such as:
 - Some people say there's no such thing any more as a 'job for life'. Do you agree or disagree?
 - Is the idea of the move away from having a 'job for life' problematic for society?
 - What motivates some people to switch career? Is it better to do this after just a few years or after spending a long time in one career?
 - If you have experience in the workplace, is there a gender pay gap in your industry? What can be done to improve this?
2. Create new groups with a representative from each group.
3. Brainstorm or supply useful language for learners to use when they report to their new group.
4. In their new groups, each learner has to report back what the attitudes and feelings were from their original group.

Extra resources

You might find the following resources helpful for the development of listening skills, both in class and as independent self-study.

Lesson plans and resources for teachers

- A variety of [free resources for preparing learners for Cambridge English Qualifications](#)

Webinar recordings about developing listening skills

- [Developing Listening skills](#)

Learn more about research into second language learning

Field, J (2008) *Listening in the Language Classroom*, Cambridge University Press

Cambridge University Press has published over [20 free and easy-to-read research papers about second language learning and teaching](#). The following may be of particular interest:

- [Giving feedback to language learners](#)
- [Specific Learning Difficulties in ELT](#)
- [Motivational aspects of using near peers as role models](#)
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