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English Qualifications

A2 Key for Schools

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



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Who this guide is for

Just like 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 our A2 Key for Schools qualification.

About A2 Key for Schools

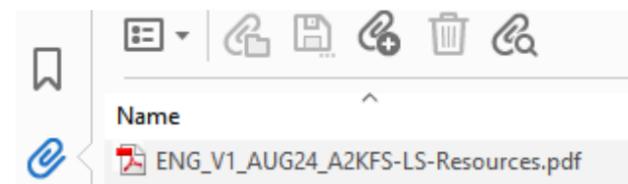
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One of the official Cambridge English Qualifications ✓ Tests reading, writing, speaking and listening skills ✓ Shows that learners have mastered the basics in English, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and using basic phrases and expressions • understanding simple written English • introducing themselves and answering basic questions about themselves • interacting with English speakers at a basic level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comes after the Cambridge English Young Learners qualifications and before B1 Preliminary for Schools ✓ Tests school-age learners at CEFR Level A2 ✓ Can be taken on paper or on a computer |
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You can find out more about our A2 Key for Schools 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:

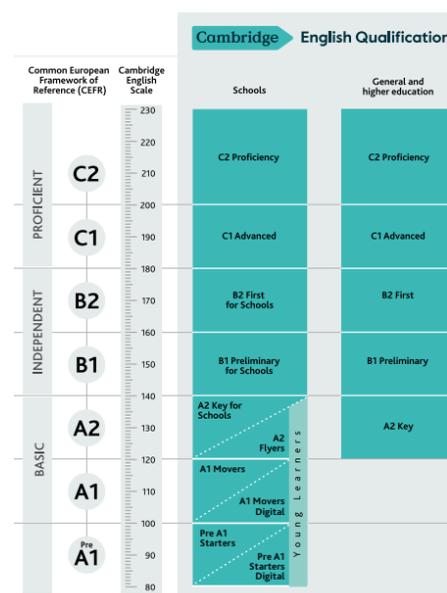


Key terminology

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.	You are listening to your parents planning a family trip. You think about where you have been before and what your family like to do. You begin to imagine where you think the next trip will be!	Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
Listening for gist	Understanding just the general topic of what you hear.	You are walking 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 sounded like it was a very happy event.	Part 4
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.	Parts 1 and 2
Listening for detailed understanding	Understanding the content of what you hear in depth, especially the opinions and attitudes of the speaker(s).	It's your birthday soon and you want to go to the cinema with your friends. You ask your friends which films they would like to see and listen carefully to what they say before you decide.	Parts 3, 4 and 5

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 what it means	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?

1. **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.?
2. **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?
3. **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 A2 Key for Schools 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. See the adaptation in **Activity 3** for a fun approach to a dictation activity.
- ✓ **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. See **Activity 1** for more ideas.
- ✗ **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, 4** and **5** for practical ideas about how to do this.

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 2** for an example of how to analyse the questions carefully before listening.
- ✗ **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.
- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Do ...** develop good habits for the exam. Teach learners little by little in every activity: *before you start any task, always read the instructions and check you understand what you have to do*. If you practise this drill regularly in class, it will be automatic by the time learners take their exam.

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.

✗ **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.

✓ **Do ...** experiment with tech tools like **Kahoot!** 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. An offline and tech-free alternative is for students to hold up a card or mini-whiteboard showing their answer while they close their eyes so they can't see the other learners' answers! Some learners find this adds an element of fun and mystery.

Preparing learners for the A2 Key for Schools 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 A2 Key for Schools exam, learners will benefit from:

- plenty of practice, in class and at home, of listening to the kinds of texts they will hear in the exam. If they have friends or family who are learning or who speak English, encourage them to practise together outside class
- chances to practise exam tasks under timed conditions, just like in the real exam
- 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 which they still find challenging.

How the exam is assessed

The A2 Key for Schools Listening paper has five parts and lasts for about 30 minutes in total, including 6 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	5 questions, each with 3 multiple-choice options	Identify key information in five short dialogues and, for each recording, choose the correct visual.	Listening for specific information
Part 2	A gap-fill with 5 gaps	Listen to a monologue and complete gaps in a page of notes.	Listening for specific information
Part 3	5 questions, each with 3 multiple-choice options	Listen to an informal conversation and choose the correct option for each question.	Listening for detailed understanding
Part 4	5 questions, each with 3 multiple-choice options	Listen to five short monologues or dialogues and, for each recording, choose the correct option.	Listening for gist
Part 5	5 questions and 8 multiple-choice options	Listen to a longer conversation between two people who know each other and choose the correct options.	Listening for detailed understanding

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 write something in a gap. This gives them something extra to think about so it can be a little more difficult for learners than the other parts of the Listening paper. When practising Part 2, make sure learners check each question carefully by highlighting key words and thinking about the grammar to help them anticipate the type of word to listen for. For example, here the missing word must complete the phrase *travel by*, so learners should realise that it will be a singular noun, such as *bus* or *train*:

Travel by **(3)**





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. You can either check with learners before you start Activity 1, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best. Here are some questions you can ask:

- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- How many pictures are there with each question? (*Three*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the question and think about the topic. Highlight key words in the question and think about what you might hear.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen and choose the best picture.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Listen and check.*)



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Aims: To practise listening for key information.

Also useful for: Reviewing vocabulary and practising writing (optional follow-up).

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and make copies of the Part 1 task for the learners. You'll need the task, the recording and the audioscript. In this activity, the class practise how to approach the task with one question.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Tell the class they are going to learn how to approach the task with just one question to start with.
2. Ask the class: You are going to listen to two people talking – but what are they talking about?
3. Write the example question from Part 1 of the Listening paper on the board and read it to the class. Ask learners to identify the key words in the question and underline them on the board.

What was the weather like on the mountain yesterday?



Top tips

The key words in Part 1 questions are usually nouns, verbs, adjectives, times or places.

★ Top tips

For stronger learners, ask them for more information when you're collecting these words. For example: Can you spell it? What kind of clothes do you need when it's raining? What about when it's sunny? etc.

Activity 1: Listening Part 1

4. Ask learners:

- What do you know about the question so far?

Answer: *the listening is about the weather and the mountain.*

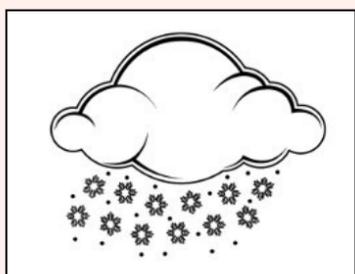
- Do you know when?

Answer: *It was yesterday.*

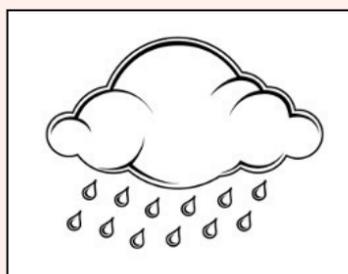
5. Review all the weather words the learners know and write these on the board. Make sure you elicit *snow*, *rain* and *sun*, plus adjectives to describe these kinds of weather, like *cold*, *wet*, *hot* and *sunny*.

6. Show the class the pictures which go with this question:

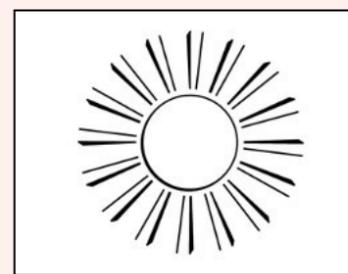
What was the weather like on the mountain yesterday?



A



B



C

7. In pairs, learners match the weather words they know to the three pictures.

Suggested answers: **A:** *snow/snowing*, **B:** *rain/rainy/raining*, **C:** *sun/sunny/warm*

Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Listening 1

8. Tell learners they're going to listen to the recording. They should just listen and think about the story. They will hear some words that they know because you've already written them on the board.
9. Play the **recording**. Note this activity practises how to approach the task with just one question from Part 1.
10. Ask learners how many of the words on the board they heard in the recording.
Which words did they hear?
11. Circle the words on the board which they heard.

Answers: *wet, cold, snow, sunny, raining*

Ask if they heard any different weather words that you don't have on the board.
Add these to the board now.

Listening 2

12. Ask: Look at the words you heard on the board. In the recording, which words did you hear first, second and third?
Tell them to **listen again** and write the numbers 1, 2 and 3 next to each picture to show the order in which they hear these words in the recording.
13. Ask learners to compare their answers with a partner, then confirm the correct answers with the class.

Answer: **B, A, C** and then **B** again

Listening 3

14. Return to the exam question on the board and the pictures.
 - Read the question: What was the weather like on the mountain yesterday?
 - Look at the pictures and ask learners:
 - i. Was there snow?
 - ii. Did it rain?
 - iii. Did the sun shine?
15. Play the **recording** one last time. Learners should listen and check their answer.

Answer: picture C

★ Top tips

There are various ways you could collect learners' suggestions anonymously during feedback stages like this:

1. If you're teaching face-to-face, get learners to hold up a piece of paper with 'A', 'B' or 'C' on it and to close their eyes while you count all the answers so they don't see what their classmates chose. Write each letter on the board and write a number next to it indicating how many students voted for each answer.
2. If you're teaching online, you could use a tool like [Kahoot!](#) for learners to vote on their answers.
3. If you're teaching online, you could simply type the letters and number of votes into the chat box or type them into a document and then share your screen.

Activity 1: Listening Part 1

After listening

16. Discuss the answer with learners. It's important that they understand why one answer is right, but it's also important that they understand why the other answers are wrong. Use the pictures to help you. For example:
- **Picture A: the snow.** Ask: Did it snow? (*No.*) What did they say about the snow? (*The guide thought it might snow, but ... it didn't!*)
 - **Picture B: the rain.** Ask: Did it rain? (*No.*) What did they say about the rain? (*It wasn't raining on the mountain, but it was raining where her friend was.*)
 - **Picture C: the sun.** Ask: What did they say about the sun? (*It was sunny all day.*) Where did the sun shine? (*Over the countryside.*)

★ Top tips

This last step draws attention to each of the multiple-choice options, also called the **distractors**. Learners have to listen carefully to the story in the audio because each of the distractors is mentioned but only one is the correct answer to the question. Two of the options are incorrect because they **don't** describe what the **climber** says about the weather on the mountain, which he says was cold but sunny.



Activity 1: Listening Part 1

Audioscript for Activity 1

Rubric: What was the weather like on the mountain yesterday?

F: I climbed King John Mountain yesterday!

M: Congratulations! But wasn't it too wet for climbing? I don't suppose you could see much from the top.

F: It was very cold and our guide was worried it might snow, but actually it was sunny all day and we had fantastic views over the countryside.

M: You were lucky – it never stopped raining here.



Optional follow-up

Use the topic of the listening to practise writing in the style of an exam task. For example: Think about the listening and imagine you walked up the mountain with your family on holiday. Write a postcard to your best friend and describe your day on the mountain.



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. You can either check with learners before you start Activity 2, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best. Here are some questions you can ask:

- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- What do you have to do? (*Listen and write the correct word, number or date in the gap.*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the questions carefully, think about the topic, highlight words, think about the language and information you might hear.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Make a note of the words you hear for each gap.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Listen, read and check your answers and your spelling.*)

Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Aims: To practise listening for specific information; to practise analysing the task carefully before listening.

Also useful for: Revising parts of speech and common vocabulary.

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and make copies of the Part 2 task for the learners. You'll need the task, the recording and the audioscript.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. On the *left-hand* side of the board, write the following table.

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Number, date, time
table	walk	big	5 / five 5 February 10:00 am



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Check learners understand each of the terms, then start with an example in each column and ask the following questions.

- **Noun** – *table* – is this a thing or something we do? (*It's a thing.*) Do you know any examples? (*Use examples from the classroom to help learners understand: table, chair, teacher, window, computer, etc.*)
- **Verb** – *walk* – is this a thing or something we do? (*It's something we do.*) Do you know any examples? (*Use examples of what's happening now to help learners understand: sit, teach, laugh, write, think, etc. Demonstrate if possible, for example walk across the room to demonstrate walking.*)
- **Adjective** – *big* – is this a thing (like a table) or does it describe something? (*It describes something.*) We can say it's a big table. What does *big* describe? (*It describes a noun, for example: a big table, a happy dog, a new computer, etc.*)
- **Number, date, time** – Elicit examples, ask: *How many students are in class? What time does class start?*

2. Tell learners you're going to listen to a recording from Part 2 of the exam. Explain that they have some information, but they don't have all of it. They have to listen for the missing information, and write correct answers in the gaps.

3. Show them the example task and ask questions about the task to check they know what they have to do.
- What should you always do before you start? (*Read the instructions and the task carefully.*)
 - You have some information, but not all of it. Look at the task. What do you have to do? (*Fill in the gaps.*)
 - How many words can go in a gap? (*Only one.*)
 - Look back at the table on the left-hand side of the board from step 1. Tell the class that the words they need to write in the gaps can be: a noun, a verb, an adjective or a number, date and time.
 - Remind the class that before they listen it always helps to check the task and think about what they might hear.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Questions 1–5

For each question, write the correct answer in the gap. Write one word or a number or a date or a time.

You will hear a teacher telling her students about a class visit to an exhibition.

Class visit to exhibition

Day of visit: **Monday**

Will see exhibition of: (1)

Exhibition at: (2) Castle

Travel by: (3)

Leave school at: (4) a.m.

Don't forget: (5)

4. Talk through the task more carefully with the whole class. Ask:

- Who is speaking in the recording? (*The teacher – to the class.*)
- What is the teacher talking about? (*A class visit to an exhibition.*)

5. Encourage learners to predict what they think the missing words might be. Working with the information they already have in the task will help them to build a story, and it can be fun to create a story with the class.

6. On the *right-hand* side of the board, write the following table.

- Talk through Questions 1–5. Use the question words in the table on the right-hand side of the board as a cue to elicit ideas (example: Q1: *What* do you think they are going to see in the exhibition?). Write their predictions on the board into the table. Encourage them to use their imagination.

Example	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
When	What	Where	How	What ...	Don't forget
Monday	?	?	?	?	?
Look at your guesses. What type of words are they?					
Noun					



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

7. Ask the class to look at the table on the left-hand side of the board from step 1. Remind learners of the word types they looked at in the previous stage. Look at the predictions. What type of word do they think they are listening for in each question?
8. Learners decide whether the missing word could be a noun, verb, adjective or number. Take a class vote for Questions 1–5. Example: How many think Question 1 is a noun?
9. Before they listen confirm the types of words they are listening for, and write them into the table.



Listening 1

10. Play the **recording**. Learners listen. Were their predictions correct? What did they hear?
11. In pairs, learners compare ideas. If they have different ideas at this stage they can write more than one idea for each gap. However, when they listen again, they have to decide on just one word.



Listening 2

12. Play the **recording** again. Learners listen and check if their ideas were correct.
13. In pairs, learners compare their answers.
14. They should make sure they've written only one word or a number, date or time in each gap.



Adaptation

To make the activity more achievable for learners who need more support, you could supply them with the first letter of each of the missing words, or the first and the last letter.



Activity 2: Listening Part 2

After listening

15. Check answers with the whole class. Ask them:

- **Gap number 1. Noun.** What was the missing noun? (*Cars*)
- **Gap number 2. Noun.** What type of noun? (*A name*) What was the name? Can you spell it? (*RAWLEY*)
- **Gap number 3. Noun.** What was the noun? (*Bus*)
- **Gap number 4. Time.** What was the missing time? (*8.30*)
- **Gap number 5. Noun.** (*Coat*)

Answer key

When	What	Where	How	What ...	Don't forget
Monday	Cars	RAWLEY	Bus	8.30	Coat
Noun	Q1. noun	Q2. noun	Q3. noun	Q4. time	Q5. noun

16. Pairs score 2 points if they correctly guessed an answer *before* listening and 1 point if they got a correct answer *while/after* listening.

17. Get each pair to count how many points they got. Praise the winners and the whole class for their hard work!

★ Top tips

For weaker learners, you can provide additional support by giving them the audioscript so they can read, listen and work with the script to help them find the correct answer. You can ask them to identify both the correct answers and any distractors. You might like to project the script on the board or, if you're teaching online, you could share it on your screen.



Optional follow-up

Get learners to make a note in their vocabulary notebooks of any words which were new to them. At the start of the next lesson, give them a mini-vocabulary quiz to check how many words they can remember from the lesson.

Activity 2: Listening Part 2

Audioscript for Activity 2

OK, children. Please listen carefully. I'm going to give you some information about our class trip to an exhibition. We're going on Monday and I think you'll enjoy it. The exhibition isn't of paintings or anything like that. It's of *cars!* You'll have a talk about them and also draw them.

The exhibition is in a place called *Rawley* Castle – that's spelled *R-A-W-L-E-Y*. It'll be in a big field there. We wanted to go by train but there isn't one at the right time so *we're going to travel by bus*. We need to leave school quite early – at *8.30 in the morning*, but we will be back here by 12 o'clock.

And one last thing: please can you all remember to bring a *coat*. It may be cold that day. But you can tell your parents that you won't need any money. I'll have a bottle of water and an apple with me for each of you. OK, have you got any questions?



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. You can either check with learners before you start Activity 3, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best. Here are some questions you can ask:

- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- How many multiple-choice options are there with each question? (*Three*)
- How many speakers are there? (*Two*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the question and think about the topic. Highlight key words in the question and the multiple-choice options, and think about what you might hear.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen and choose the best option.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Listen and check.*)

Activity 3: Listening Part 3

Aims: To practise understanding attitude and opinions (top-down processing), to build confidence, especially in mixed-ability classes.

Also useful for: Part 4.

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and make copies of the Part 3 sample task for the class. Don't worry if learners have never heard this recording before – they will have the chance to listen to it several times in this activity. This activity practises how to approach the task with just one question from Part 3.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Tell the class they are going to practise Part 3 by listening to just one question, where Orla is talking to her friend about where they can go and work on their school project.
2. Write the question on the board. Rephrase it slightly if necessary. For the example task below, you could write:

What does Orla think about the park?

3. If there is a local park near your school, ask the class what their opinion is of their local park. What words would they use to describe it? Do the class have the same ideas or different ideas about their park? Is the park a popular place to go? Can they give reasons for their opinions? Write interesting vocabulary and adjectives on the board that come out of the discussion.

4. Return to the question on the board and ask: **What does Orla think about the park?**

Activity 3: Listening Part 3

5. Give learners the task with the multiple-choice options and ask them to predict what Orla will say. The discussion they just had will help them with their predictions and to listen for Orla's opinion.

Orla thinks the park is

- A** too crowded
- B** too cold
- C** too boring.

Listening 1

6. Play the **recording** once. Learners don't need to write anything, but should just listen for the general answer to the question and check their predictions.
7. After listening, learners compare their ideas with a partner. Don't confirm the correct answer yet.
8. Feedback. Take ideas from the class to find out what Orla thinks of the park. There is no need to confirm the answer at this stage.

Listening 2, 3 and 4

9. This is a Dictogloss activity, which means the learners have to listen and reconstruct the text. Give each learner a large piece of blank paper with plenty of space to write. Explain that they are going to listen very carefully to what Orla says and write down what they hear, like a dictation. Tell them to leave some space between each word, so that the next time they listen, they can write in any words they didn't hear the first time.
10. Play the **recording** a second time. This time, ask learners to listen and write down what they think they hear. They may not hear every word, so remind them they can leave a gap for the missing words. Pairs compare notes. Can they help one another with any missing words?
11. Play the **recording** for a third and fourth time. Each time learners listen again, they can check what they have written and add any missing words. Check the attachment for a summary of how to approach the Dictogloss for Activity 3.

After listening

12. Put pairs together to compare their ideas in small groups. How similar or different are their texts? The learners in each group should collaborate. One learner in each group writes their best copy on a clean piece of paper, filling in any gaps that are left in their notes.

★ Top tips

Don't worry if learners' notes are incomplete after the final listening – this is the point of the activity. Parts 3 and 4 of the exam require learners to understand the speakers' attitudes or opinions, so an ability to apply logic and context when trying to understand general meaning is a valuable skill to develop, both for the exam and for everyday listening in real life.

● Adaptation

After step 12, reconstruct the whole text with the class on the board. Elicit the text from the class. As you elicit, write the text on the board. Accept any mistakes at this stage – say nothing. Check the class have included the main points in the text, even if they didn't catch every word. When the text is on the board, step back and read it aloud to the class. Ask them if they would like to make any changes. Ask them to think about the spelling, and the grammar, where there are mistakes e.g. missing third person 's'. You could say: 'I am not sure here, take another look, what could we change?' This activity means you can check understanding of the main ideas, and then take the opportunity to examine the language in closer detail with the class.

📄 Activity 3: Listening Part 3

13. Learners put their final texts on the classroom wall. Ask the class to walk around the classroom and read each other's ideas. Did the other groups write a similar text?

Now the learners have a good idea about the main ideas in the recording, go back to the three multiple-choice options. Can they identify the correct answer?

14. Show them the original script so they can compare this with their notes. (By this point, they will have the all information they need to help them explain why the answer is A, not B and not C, and they'll probably be desperate to see how accurate their work was!)

15. Finally, remember to ask learners if they can explain why an answer was wrong. Take time to check they understand why the correct answer is correct, but also why the wrong answers are wrong.

Activity 3: Listening Part 3

Answer key

Orla thinks the park is

- A too crowded
- B too cold
- C too boring.

Audioscript for Activity 3

But **the park's really busy** these days – we can't work there easily. It's better when it's cold, nobody goes there. They think it's boring!

Distractors:

- ✓ **A.** Orla thinks the park is *too busy* these days. This means she thinks the park is too crowded, so option **A** is the correct answer.
- ✗ **B.** Orla thinks the park is *better when it's cold*. She doesn't think it's too cold. Option **B** is incorrect.
- ✗ **C.** Orla says *other people think* the park is *boring*. Orla doesn't think the park is too boring, so option **C** is incorrect.



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. You can either check with learners before you start Activity 4, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best. Here are some questions you can ask:

- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- How many multiple-choice options are there with each question? (*Three*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the question and think about the topic. Highlight key words in the question and the multiple-choice options, and think about what you might hear.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen and choose the best option.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Listen and check.*)

Activity 4: Listening Part 4

Aims: To practise listening for gist, to provide creative ways for learners to show their understanding of speakers' attitudes and opinions.

Also useful for: Part 3.

Preparation and equipment: Open the [resources](#) for the guide and make copies of the Part 4 task for the class. In this activity, the class work with one question to practise how to approach the task. Provide learners with a big piece of blank paper to draw on, a pencil and an eraser.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Set the context for the listening. To get learners thinking about music and concerts, bring in pictures of musical events and show them a photo of a concert and ask them:
 - What kind of music do you like?
 - Can you play a musical instrument? What do you play?
 - Who are your favourite singers, composers or groups?
 - Imagine you can have your own private concert with any musicians. Who would you choose? Who would you invite?

Activity 4: Listening Part 4

2. Tell learners they're going to listen to just one question from a Part 4 recording in which a boy tells his friend about a concert he has been to. Write the question on the board, elicit the key words with the class but don't show them the multiple-choice options yet:

You will hear a boy telling a friend about a concert he has been to. How does the boy feel about the experience?

3. Give each learner a blank piece of paper and tell them they're going to draw what they hear. Help them identify key words in the question (*boy, feel*) and tell them that these words will help them with their drawing. Check they understand what to do:
- How many people will you hear talking? (*One or two.*)
 - Who will you hear talking? (*A boy to his friend.*)
 - Do you need to write any words? (*No.*)
 - Are you going to draw the concert? (*No.*)
 - Are you going to draw and show how the boy feels? (*Yes.*)
 - Are you going to draw how the boy felt during the concert? (*No.*)
 - Are you going to draw how the boy feels now? (*Yes.*)

4. Write the listening task on the board:

Listen and draw a picture to show how the boy feels after the concert

Top tips

Drawing gives learners a creative way to show their understanding of general meaning, which is tested in Part 4. This is especially useful for mixed-ability classes and learners with Specific Learning Difficulties because they can show they understand the gist of the recording and can recognise speakers' attitudes and opinions without focusing on things like vocabulary or spelling.



Activity 4: Listening Part 4



Listening 1

4. Play this **recording** once and let learners listen.
5. Review the listening task that is on the board. Give them a moment to start drawing. Remind them what they should draw and that they don't have to be wonderful artists – just draw the general idea.



Listening 2

6. Play the **recording** again and tell learners to listen and complete their drawing. If they have already finished a simple drawing, tell them to listen for specific words which tell them about the boy's feelings and to write these next to their drawing.
7. Let learners compare their drawings, and the words they heard with a partner. How are their pictures similar or different?



Listening 3

8. Now tell learners they're going to listen again but this time they have to choose an answer from a list. Check what they already know about Part 4. Give learners the sample task and talk through it together:
 - What should you do first? (*Read the instructions and look at the multiple-choice options so that you know what you have to listen for.*)
 - How many options are there to choose from? (*Three.*)
 - Do you think the person speaking will use the same words as the options? (*Maybe not – he or she might use synonyms.*)

**You will hear a boy telling a friend about a concert he has been to.
How does the boy feel about the experience?**

- A. surprised
- B. lucky
- C. upset

9. Play the **recording** for the last time. Learners choose one answer, then compare their choice with a partner.
10. Take whole-class feedback with a show of hands for each option. Ask them to say what they heard that helped them find the answer.



Adaptation

For learners who need additional support, you can supply them with the audioscript to read as they listen and follow. This will give them the support they need to be able to complete the task successfully.

If you have learners who need more help, you can reduce the information load and provide them with just two of the multiple-choice options, which is an idea that will work for other parts of the exam. As they grow in confidence and their listening skills improve, you can then supply them with the three multiple-choice options as they would have in the exam.

Activity 4: Listening Part 4

After listening

11. Before giving the class the correct answer, give them a copy of the audioscript to read.
12. Check learners understand why B is correct and also why the other answers are not correct:
 - How did the boy feel? (*He says he was **pleased**.*)
 - Is *pleased* the same as *surprised*? (*No. So option A is not correct.*)
 - Who was *upset*? (*His friends.*)
 - Which word told us this? (**Unhappy**.)
 - Why were his friends upset? (*They didn't get a ticket.*)
 - Which words told us this? (*Sold out.*)
 - What about the boy – did he get a ticket? (*Yes.*)
 - So does he feel upset? (*No. So option C is not correct.*)
 - Was it easy to get tickets? (*No.*)
 - Which words told us this? (**Your uncle managed to get tickets.**)
 - So how does he feel? (*Lucky. So option B is correct.*)
13. Get learners to look again at the pictures they drew. Do they need to change any details in order to show the right answer? (For example, does Gary look sad? He should look pleased!)

Audioscript for Activity 4

Friend: What did you think of the concert you went to on Saturday, Gary?

Boy: Oh, it was amazing. The music was so exciting. I wanted it to go on forever.

Friend: It was great your uncle managed to get tickets for you.

Boy: I know. I'm so pleased. Lots of my friends were really unhappy because they sold out so quickly.

Friend: That's sad!

Top tips

It's a good idea to ask simple, clear questions like this after listening. Instead of simply telling learners an answer is right or wrong, these questions make them think. This helps them understand how the task works and find the best answer from the three options, avoiding the distractors.

Optional follow-up

Learners could practise the dialogue in pairs. If their original pictures showed something different (for example, Gary feeling upset), they could write and act out a different dialogue which shows this meaning. Creative tasks like this help learners understand how the task works and how to get the right answer by avoiding the other multiple-choice options they hear in the recording.



Part 5: 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. You can either check with learners before you start Activity 5, or at a point in the lesson that you feel works best for your learners. Here are some questions you can ask:

- How many questions are there? (*Five*)
- What do you have to do? (*Listen to the speaker and match to the correct option.*)
- What should you do before you listen? (*Read the question, look at the words in the list and think about the topic.*)
- What should you do the first time you listen? (*Listen and choose the best option.*)
- What should you do the second time you listen? (*Listen and check.*)



Activity 5: Listening Part 5

Aims: To review the format of Listening Part 5, to practise listening for key information; to practise identifying distractors.

Also useful for: Vocabulary review, speaking practice (see **optional follow-up activity**).

Preparation and equipment: Open the **resources** for the guide and make copies of the Part 5 task for learners. Bring a few photos of your family and friends to class for step 1. For the optional follow-up activity, prepare pictures of the five places from the multiple-choice options which show the correct answers to the listening task (airport, desert, farm, sea, swimming pool). You could print one set of these five pictures for each pair of learners or project them on the board so the whole class can see them. If you're teaching online, you could open the picture files on your computer and share your screen.

Steps: Prepare to listen

1. Tell learners they're going to see some photos of your family and friends. Ask them to guess who each person is and where they are.
2. Tell learners they're going to listen to a Part 5 recording in which a grandmother is talking to her grandson about some family photos. They have to listen carefully and say where the person is in each photo.
3. Check what learners already know about Part 5. If they haven't practised this part of the exam before, give them the sample task and remind them they should always check instructions before starting a task. Give them a few moments to read it, then ask:
 - How many people will you hear talking? (*Two.*)
 - Do they know each other? (*Yes.*)
 - Who will you hear talking and how do they know each other? (*A grandmother to her grandson.*)
 - What do you have to do to find the right answers? (*Match the five people to the place where they are in the photo. Write the correct letter in the boxes next to each person.*)
 - How many options are there to choose from? (*Eight, which means there are three extra places because only five people are mentioned.*)

 **Adaptation**

If you don't have personal photos or prefer not to use these, you could find photos online of a famous family (real or fictional) and use these instead. For example, a well-known couple of actors or singers with their children, or a cartoon family from a film that the learners will recognise.

 **Activity 5: Listening Part 5**

Questions 1 – 5

For each question, choose the correct answer.

You will hear a grandmother telling her grandson about some of her photos. Where is each person in the photo?

Example

0 mum

People

Places

1 grandpa

A airport

2 dad

B beach

3 brother

C castle

4 uncle

D desert

5 aunt

E farm

F sea

G swimming pool

H wood

Activity 5: Listening Part 5

10. Give each learner a copy of the audioscript and work through these steps to demonstrate what you mean:

- Ask learners to **circle** the part of the script when Grandma talks about Grandpa, when she talks about Dad, about the boy's brother, etc.
- Now take a closer look at Grandpa. Learners should **highlight** how many places Grandma mentions when she talks about Grandpa. (Answer: *lake, waiting for a plane*)

Child: Oh, is it **Grandpa** in this photo?

Grandma: Yes. I took it when we were going on holiday to a beautiful **lake**. We were **waiting for our plane**.

- Compare the places Grandma mentions with the list of options. (These are on the board and also on the question paper.)
- Ask: Which do you think is the correct answer and why? (Answers: *Grandma mentions a lake – do we have lake on the list? No. He is waiting for a plane – where do we wait for a plane? So the answer must be ... airport!*)
- Please check the **resources** pdf for activity 5. There is a copy of the audioscript for you to refer to with the key information highlighted.

11. In pairs, ask learners to read the next part of the script, where Grandma talks about the boy's dad, and highlight the places she mentions – as they did for the part where she talks about Grandpa.

12. Monitor learners while they read and find these words so you can check if they have any problems.

13. Tell learners to do the same for the remaining three parts of the listening: find the places Grandma mentions and highlight them.

★ Top tips

When working with an audioscript, it's helpful if you can display the script on the board so all learners can see it and work through the task together. (If you're teaching online, you could share the script on your screen.)

★ Top tips

When doing exam listening tasks, learners might hear the wrong answer mentioned (a distractor) and choose this, so it's important that they listen very carefully and understand the **whole** sentence or sentences. In this activity, learners first analyse the script in writing instead of listening to it. This shows them that they need to be careful not to choose the first word they hear. It also gives them more time to think, which helps them understand the Part 5 task format and also prepares them for future success in exam listening tasks.

Activity 5: Listening Part 5

Listening 1

14. Tell the class to look at the task, and prepare to listen. Make sure they turn over the audioscript so they're not reading now – only listening!
15. Now play the complete [recording](#). Ask learners to decide where each person is in the photos. They can make a note of their answers in their notebook.
16. Ask learners to compare their answers with a partner before listening again, but don't confirm the correct answers yet.

Listening 2

17. Play the [recording](#) again. Tell learners to check their answers and make any changes if they need to.
18. Learners compare their answers with a partner. If they disagree on anything, you can suggest that they can take another look at the audioscript.

Listening 3

19. Now play the [recording](#) again in short sections. Pause after each question and ask learners to confirm:
 - Where's Grandpa? (*airport*)
 - Where's Dad? (*sea*)
 - Where's the boy's brother? (*farm*)
 - Where's the boy's uncle? (*desert*)
 - Where's the boy's aunt? (*swimming pool*)Mark the correct answers on the board as you confirm each one.


Activity 5: Listening Part 5
Answer key

grandpa	dad	brother	uncle	aunt
1 airport (a)	2 sea (f)	3 farm (e)	4 desert (d)	5 swimming pool (g)

**Optional follow-up**

Use the topic of the listening to practise speaking in the style of an exam task. Put learners in pairs and show them five pictures of the places mentioned in the listening: airport, desert, farm, sea, swimming pool. Give them instructions for a task like in Speaking Part 2:

- Here are some pictures that show different places.
- Do you like these different places? Say why or why not.

(Some learners might not have been to all these places, but that's OK – they can just talk about the ones they know about.)

Give them 3–4 minutes to do the task in pairs, then ask a few students to share what their partner told them with the rest of the class.

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

- [Preparing students online for Cambridge English Listening exam papers](#) (A2 Key, B1 Preliminary and B2 First for Schools exams)
- [Developing Listening skills](#)

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