

FCE Listening tactics discussion questions and tips

Discuss these aspects of the listening task(s) that you did or have in front of you:

What things about the task(s) make them difficult to complete? How can you tackle those things?

What things about the task(s) can make them easier to complete? How can you use those things to help you?

Mark these things + for HELP or – for HINDRANCE. Some things could be considered both a help and a hindrance, in which case you should put them in both categories.

1. Answers which have exactly the same meaning as the words which are in the recording should also get a mark
2. In Part One, the questions are also read out
3. Intonation can reinforce right or wrong options or help you guess
4. It's impossible to predict anything about a multiple choice answer before listening (although it is worth thinking about what synonyms you might hear or how what you hear could be different to the options such as being about a different person)
5. Most wrong options are similar to things which are said on the recording
6. Multiple choice questions are in the same order as the recording
7. Numbers, dates etc can also be written as figures
8. People often make mistakes when transferring their answers to the answer sheet
9. Signalling phrases such as "but in fact..." often suggest that the right or wrong option has just been said or is just coming
10. Some wrong options are things which aren't mentioned at all in the recording
11. Sometimes only the time or subject is different between the wrong options and the recording
12. The correct multiple choice options usually have different wording to the recording
13. The kinds of interactions in each part of the exam are always the same
14. The task types in each part of the exam are always the same
15. The words around a gap will usually be different from the recording
16. The words in a gap will be exactly the same as in the recording
17. The wrong multiple choice options often have different wording to the recording
18. There are no half marks – any spelling mistakes, grammatical errors or added information that is not correct etc means no point
19. There is often something after the answer that confirms/ reinforces it
20. There is often something before the answer that can help you anticipate that the answer is coming
21. There is often something before the answer that can help you anticipate what the answer will be
22. There is sometimes more than one reason why a wrong option is incorrect
23. Words in gaps must fit grammatically
24. You can also guess during the transferring answers to your answer sheet stage
25. You can hear all the recordings twice
26. You can often guess something about the word in a gap before listening, e.g. that it is a noun or a day of the week
27. You have plenty of time to read through all the questions before the recording begins
28. You can write on or underline things on the question paper
29. You don't lose marks for wrong guesses
30. You have five minutes at the end to transfer your answers
31. You have to write all answers in capital letters

Discuss how you can use the things that make the exam easier and tackle the things that make the exam more difficult.

What other tactics can you use in the exam?

What should you first do when you open the Listening paper and see the first task?

What should you do while the instructions are being explained and the Part One questions are being read out?

What kinds of things should you underline?

What should you do if you don't know the answer?/ How can you make it easier to guess?

What should you do if you are sure that you have the answer(s) before a recording finishes?

What things can make you lose marks at the transferring answers stage? How can you avoid those problems?

How can you make exam listening practice at home realistic practice for Cambridge First?

What should you do after you do an exam listening at home?

How else can you prepare for the listening exam outside of class?

Choose a top five from this list:

- ✧ Comedy (sitcoms, sketch shows, etc)
- ✧ English language learning radio programmes
- ✧ English language pop songs
- ✧ Graded readers with recordings
- ✧ Listening again to exam recordings after you have already read the tapescript
- ✧ Lots of timed exam practice
- ✧ Radio documentaries (e.g. BBC science podcasts)
- ✧ Radio dramas (e.g. radio soap operas like The Archers)
- ✧ Radio news
- ✧ Radio with English-speaking DJs
- ✧ Recordings of lectures (e.g. Royal Society lecture series BBC podcasts)
- ✧ TV documentaries, e.g. nature documentaries
- ✧ TV dramas
- ✧ TV news
- ✧ Textbook listenings (FCE or other EFL textbooks)
- ✧ Videos of lectures (e.g. TED.com)