



## Kev's English Podcast: Episode 14: How to improve your listening skills for exams..

Hello again, in this episode I talk about a problem some of my students had recently. They were taking OET and kept getting low listening scores, hear my strategy to combat this...  
By the way, If you want to join my groups or want personal tuition, see the links below..

If you want lessons, click here <https://www.italki.com/en/teacher/1078268>

If you want to see my videos, click here <https://www.youtube.com/@TheEnglishNative>

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Hello and welcome to Kev's English Podcast. Real English every week.

Hello, hello, it's Kevin here.

Time for another episode of Kev's English Podcast. It's been a week or two, I know, but I've had much to do in that time. Lots of new lessons and students and making videos, you know, all the usual stuff.

And, of course, some apartmenty stuff, doing some stuff in the flat. So, anyway, I've got back on track now. So, a couple of things.

I've got an episode now and I'm going to make another episode in a minute or two after this. A couple of things that have cropped up with my students in the last few weeks. So, you know, on my talkie I've got students taking IELTS and TOEFL and the different Cambridge tests, the BTE, and the OET, Occupational English Test, that's the one for medical people and personnel, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc.

And I've got a few students there. They've all done extremely well for the sections I've been helping them with, which is writing and speaking. So, we've been working on those and they have passed those, the component that I was assisting them with.

But they've been having trouble with the listening section, which I find kind of strange. So, I'm going to talk about that, about how you can improve or develop your listening skills. There's some strategies and there's a few general bits of advice.

So, um, let's take a look at it. Let me break it down. So, right now, this should be obvious.

I say it, but you would think so. You need exposure. You need to listen to as much English as possible.

This is the most important, right? The better you want to become at anything, the more effort you need to put into the process. So, as much exposure to English, natural English, aimed at natives, what we call authentic materials. So, that's not the English that you find in textbooks or in course books on the audio, because that's not natural.

That's not how native people actually speak. In fact, one of the issues is, um, when people go to an English class, the teacher, as I'm doing kind of now, you know, does a teacher advice. Hello, this is my enunciated teacher advice.

And they think, yeah, I can understand that. When they get to the UK and they get into a taxi and taxi going, all right, mate, where do you want to go tonight? They've got no idea what they're talking about, you know? So, authentic listening is best, not the artificial listening that you get from course books and textbooks and in a classroom. So, you need different accents, right? So, you've got the British, English one, American, Canadian, New Zealand, what have you got, South African, Nigerian, various, Australian, you know? So, there's a bit of a difference.

Obviously, there's a difference between all these. Now, actually, because of the ubiquitousness of American TV, film and media, some of my students had a problem with understanding me at first, because they were so used to American accents, which I'm not going to attempt, I'm not an actor, but they were so used to the American British that an English man, such as I am, my accent was difficult for them to understand. So, exposure.

Now, there's lots of ways you can do this, right? The internet, you know, you've got podcasts, right? BBC, English We Speak, you know, they've got the World Service, radio, internet, radio, there's several sites where you can stream, all the radio stations from Canada, America, New Zealand, England, you know, worldwide. Audiobooks, your famous actors recording books, radio plays, go on YouTube, you've got different accents, many, many things, you know, so I would check out those. I mean, even music, such as songs, I've had a few students in the past who told me that they learned English by listening to English music, well English probably, American, but, you know, English speaking music and songs.

You can do that, so, you know, you've got podcasts, radio, books, radio plays, YouTube stuff, you know, so much material. Music, you know, I don't know who your favourite bands or artists are, but there's quite a few. I mean, my personal musical tastes probably won't be too much use for you.

Heavy metal and rock, if you can understand what they are singing about, but anyway, so maybe pop music might be better for you, you know. Also, you can watch movies, films, shows, I'll talk about that in the next episode though, because there's more I have to tell you regarding that. So, exposure, that's the most important thing.

Now, the second one is a strategic way, which I tell all my students. So, for example, right, they're doing the IELTS test or the OET test. What they do, they take the listening, you know, then they check their answers and they say, oh, you know, I've only got so many answers, my listening skills are crap, etc.

So, what I tell them is, when they are practising, what they should do, do the listening test first,

right, whether it's IELTS test or TOEFL or, you know, occupational English test, etc. Do the test first, check the answers and then get the transcript and if it's a proper test out of a proper book for OET or IELTS, you'll have a transcript, right. So, do the test first, check the answers, then play the audio again, read the script, pay attention to the details, right, do that as many times as it takes.

If you need to translate any unknown words, the important thing is to find out not what the answer is but why you chose that as the answer. Was it a minimal pair? Was it such as a sheep or ship? Was it very similar sounding words like, was it eight as a number? Was it eight as a verb? Was it eighty, eighteen, you know? So, if you play the audio a second time, indeed a third time, read the script, follow along, you can translate it, interpret it, underline the difficult words, etc, right. Then, put the script down and try it again and you should notice a difference if you try this as a method.

So, do the listening test first, check the answers, listen to it again with the transcript and then put the transcript down, listen again and repeat this as many times as necessary. Now, that can, you know, that could work really well. Now, another thing is the speed, right.

Now, native speakers often don't enunciate, there's no gap between words and it can be too fast, you know. So, what you can do, if you download some audio or if you are streaming it live, for example, on YouTube, you can reduce the playback speed, you can turn it down if it's too fast. If you're talking, it sounds like this, right, my attack, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, all right, oh, that's a little bit fast, turn it down.

If you're using iTunes, you can change the playback speed there. If you are watching or listening on YouTube, you can change the playback speed on that. Some players, I use one called GOM, if you use that one, you can turn the playback speed, sorry, yeah, turn the playback speed back on that.

So, if it's too fast, turn it down just a little bit, a little bit until you can hear it and then you can gradually speed up to normal speed, okay. So, that can work also. So, as I said, right, play the audio, play it again, read the script, then play it without and try turning the speed of the playback down just enough so you can understand what they are saying.

And again, exposure to different accents, that's very important. Also, finding somebody to practise with. Now, I've mentioned this before.

So, the internet is full of people from all over the world, all these different apps. I think I mentioned it on the previous episode, I can't remember, it's been a week or two, but I spoke about different language exchange websites and apps where you can find people to speak to. I recommend those.

So, as I've spoken about that in the previous episode, I won't say much about it today. But you can find people online, there's many different apps and websites where you can find that. Or maybe even in person, I spoke about that also.

If you live in a major city, a capital city, there's usually some English language exchange conversation clubs. There's different sites where you can find them, meet up, couch surfing, etc. So, finding somebody to speak to with or practise with either on one of these language exchange sites or even just an in-person conversation club or event, that's going to be a big help for you as well.

So, that's about it really. That's all I wanted to say. The exposure part, that should be obvious, getting as much exposure to different accents and sounds as possible.

But the other thing about the method, I thought that was quite important too. How to listen with a script and how to reduce the playback speed. So, if you are taking any of these exams, whether

IELTS, TOEFL, PTE, they're the popular ones, OET if you're a doctor or a nurse and you're struggling with the listening, try that method.

See if it works. I can pretty much guarantee that it does. Nearly everybody who's tried it says that they have got better listening test results by approaching that.

If you simply listen to the audio once and just check the answers, that's not very effective. So, try that and see how you get on. Right, that's about it for today.

I'm going to make another episode, actually I might do it just after this one. I've got time. I'm going to talk about learning English with film and there's a few things there that I'm going to talk about, about subtitles.

There's a couple of applications which I've recently found that allow you to have two subtitles on the screen at the same time, your language and English. So, I'll talk about that in the next episode. So, hope that was useful.

I'll see you soon. Okay, bye for now.