

Who is this for?

This leaflet is for anyone who wants to familiarize themselves with authentic social conversations.

The aim of this leaflet

The aim of this leaflet is to give you suggestions about what you can do to improve your skills in listening to **authentic** listening materials. Research findings indicate that authentic language materials expose learners more to the target language situations, thus increasing their cultural awareness and their motivation to learn the language.

Learning tips

Getting ready for listening to authentic social conversations...

To improve your ability to understand authentic social conversations, you may like to consider these suggestions:

- **Comprehension Checks**

Global Comprehension

The aim here is to get the overall meaning of the message. It does not matter if you miss words, sentences or

even whole passages because you are aiming at the gist. Suggested techniques for improving your global comprehension are:

- Note-taking while listening.
- Writing a summary when you have finished listening.
- Deliberately skipping parts of the recording (by using the 'Fast Forward' button) to see if you can still make sense of it.
- Comparing your summary, notes for understanding of the recording with that of a friend who has listened to the same passage.

Detailed Comprehension

The aim here is to hear every single sound and syllable and to understand every single word. Suggested techniques for improving your detailed comprehension are:

- Stopping the tape, rewinding and listening again every time you miss something.
- Making a full transcription, that is, writing out the whole passage.
- Working with a friend, making up lists of questions for one another.

Selective Comprehension

The aim here is to understand one particular aspect of a recording, or to obtain a specific piece of information. Suggested techniques for improving your selective comprehension are:

- Concentrating on a given category of words, such as the names of all the foreign countries mentioned in a news broadcast and ignoring the rest.
- Thinking of a question to which the recording probably contains the answer, then searching for the answer.
- Getting someone who already knows the passage to set you questions about it.

Mixed Techniques

The aim here is to mix the *global*, *detailed* and *selective* comprehension techniques according to our needs, to the situation and to the nature of the message (as we always do in our own language), in a more deliberate and systematic manner. Suggested techniques are:

- Listening 'globally' to a recording before getting down to 'detailed' work.

- Alternating ‘global’ and ‘detailed’ listening. Five minutes’ global work, then two minutes’ detailed work and so on.
- Listening to a number of separate passages in detail, then to the recording as a whole.
- Setting yourself two listening tasks at the same time: for example, overall comprehension plus finding a specific piece of information.

- **Using a Script**

Before Listening...

- Prepare yourself before listening by checking on the vocabulary, the identities of the different speakers, the topics to be discussed etc.
- No need to read the whole script in one go: you might try reading a passage, listening to it, reading another passage and so on.
- Read the first part, just to get started, then listen to the rest unprepared, or until you hit a major problem.

While Listening...

- Follow the script as the tape plays, then one or more times without the script.

- Alternate between listening-and-reading and just listening.
- Cover part of the script with a strip of paper and try to fill in the blanks while listening.

After Listening...

- Listen to the whole of the recording one more time, then check your understanding of what you have heard.
- Listen to a section of the tape, then stop and read, listen again, stop and read and so on.
- Make your own transcription of part of the recording and then check it against the script.

- **Predicting what is on the tape**

Before Listening...

- Try to predict, on the basis of the topic or title of the recording in question, what sort of vocabulary, ideas, remarks etc. are likely to occur.

During listening...

- Stop at intervals and try to guess how the speaker will continue: for example, you can stop the tape half-way through a sentence and suggest the actual words you think the speaker is going to use,

or, at a more general level, you could try to predict how he or she will develop his argument.

After Listening...

- Compare your predictions with what was actually said, and listen again.

Jigsaw Listening

- Do not listen to the recording in chronological order. Instead, you listen to a bit from the end, then a bit from the beginning, then a bit from the middle and so on, only listening to the whole recording when you think that you have managed to work out globally what it is all about.

- **Working in a Group**

- One member of the group can keep the script, he or she then becomes the ‘expert’, helping the rest to have a clear idea of what the tape is about. Everyone can have a turn so that everybody can benefit from a different role.
- Most of the techniques listed above can be done in pairs or groups.

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And now...

If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress, please get in touch - **we are here to support your independent learning!** To contact us:

- Make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to <https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/>.
- E-mail your questions to **iLANG** (icilang@ust.hk).
- Ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

What else can you do?

- Browse the many physical (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-commons/#resources>) and online materials (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/resources-listening/>) for Listening.
- Join a Listening activity or short course (<http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/listening/>).