

## Are you a good listener?

By [Sarah Sahr](#)

Listening is, in my opinion, the most important and most neglected skill in ESL/EFL teaching. I believe that people spend most of their time listening and, with the advent of smart phones, it can be argued that peoples' listening skills are deteriorating. Throw in second language and you have a cocktail of miscommunication just wanting to be served. This quick lesson outlines some rules that need to be followed when students practice their listening skills.

<b>Materials:</b> <a href="#">Good Listening Evaluation</a>
<b>Audience:</b> All proficiency levels; all ages
<b>Objective:</b> Students will be able to demonstrate good listening skills by having conversations with their partners on assigned topics or a topic of their own choosing.
<b>Outcome:</b> Students will evaluate their own and a partner's listening skills.
<b>Duration:</b> 40–50 minutes.

### Introduction (10 minutes)

Brainstorm, as a class, the characteristics of a good listener. Use the “Think-Pair-Share” activity:

- Think to yourself: Each student creates a list of good listening characteristics in his or her head.
- Pair yourself: Students find a partner to share their lists with. This is an opportunity for students to practice what they are going to say to the class.
- Share with class: Each student shares characteristics with the whole class.

As students share good listening characteristics, you can write them on the board.

### Starter Activity (15 minutes)

Divide the class into four teams. Have each team form a line that starts at the front of the class and goes toward the back. Take the last person in each line out to a place where the other classmates can't hear (outside the classroom is best). Tell these four students a simple sentence (make sure they remember it). Once they return to the classroom, they should go back to the end of their team's line. When the teacher says, “GO!” students in the back of the lines whisper the sentence into the person's ear in front of them, and then that student whispers it to the next student, and then the next and next...

It's a competition. The first group to be able to get the sentence to the front of the line and recite the sentence correctly to the teacher gets a point. If a team finishes and finds that their sentence is incorrect, the student from the back can send the sentence again if no other team has won the round yet; however, once one team successfully gets the correct sentence to the teacher, the round is over. Once a point is awarded, the person in the back of the line comes to the front and the new last person in line goes out to the hall to receive the new sentence.

This can go on until everyone gets a chance to go in the hall and receive a sentence, or for just a set number of sentences. Make sure each sentence is more complex than the last, in grammar and/or in pronunciation. However, keep in mind the proficiency levels of your students. For example:

- I am going to see a movie this weekend.
- The traffic is very congested in Ho Chi Minh City.
- When sheep are tired, they sleep on the grass and in the sunshine.
- Studying English and practicing the piano are my two favorite pastimes.
- Sally sells sea shells by the sea shore.

### **Pair Work** (10 minutes)

Have each student return to his or her seat and find the same partner from the “Think-Pair-Share” activity. These pairs of students will be having one-on-one conversations with each other. Topics can be assigned by the teacher, or students can choose them on their own. Some suggested topics for different levels might be:

#### **Primary School Students**

- School cafeteria food
- Is there enough time to play in school?
- Dealing with siblings

#### **Secondary School Students**

- The school’s dress code
- Sports or hobbies
- Celebrities

#### **Adult Students**

- Transportation to school
- Work/jobs (or lack thereof)
- Family heritage and traditions

Obviously, some of these topics might need a quick review of vocabulary or the teacher might need to share some talking points. When choosing topics, keep your students’ interests in mind.

Make sure you give students time to think about their topic before they start talking to their partner. Each student should talk for at least two minutes. Partners should give appropriate comments in response and ask appropriate questions when necessary. Encourage students to stay on topic. However, if they find themselves off topic, that’s fine. The goal of this lesson is to get students listening to each other.

### **Evaluation** (5 minutes)

Now that students have listened to one another, pass out the [Good Listening Evaluation](#) to students. You may want to go over this as a class. Students must rate themselves and each other (see handout for more details).

### **Closure** (5 minutes)

Go back to your list of listening characteristics on the board. How many of the students utilized the characteristics listed on the board? How many students think they are good listeners? How many students think they are bad listeners? If students are comfortable with it, have partners share their evaluations.

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## **Good Listening Evaluation**



What was the topic you and your partner talked about? Please write it here: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Your Name:</b>		<b>Partners' Name:</b>	
When answering these questions, rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10: 1 being very bad, 10 being very good. Be honest!	Scale 1-10	When answering these questions, rate your partner on a scale from 1 to 10: 1 being very bad, 10 being very good. Be honest!	Scale 1-10
Did you maintain eye contact?		Did he/she maintain eye contact?	
Did you listen without interrupting the speaker?		Did he/she listen without interrupting you?	
Did you listen without distractions (stay focused)?		Did he/she listen without distractions (stay focused)?	
Did you practice appropriate body language and posture?		Did he/she practice appropriate body language and posture?	
Did you ask appropriate question at the right time?		Did he/she ask appropriate questions at the right time?	
Add up all your scores. TOTAL:		Add up your partner's scores. TOTAL:	
Find the average by dividing the TOTAL by 5. AVERAGE:		Find the average by dividing the TOTAL by 5. AVERAGE:	