

LISTENING TO LEARN AND LEARNING TO LISTEN

A series of listening activities for young learners of English

Welcome to **Listening to Learn and Learning to Listen** series by the National Council of Educational Research and Training. This series of listening activities seeks to provide learners a set of opportunities to listen to spoken language. Students need to comprehend spoken language in lectures, in the media (radio, cinema and television), and in face-to-face interactions. Listening is crucial to language acquisition because it provides ‘comprehensible input’. Comprehensible input refers to meaningful oral and written language somewhat above the learners’ current level of mastery. Such input allows for the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, which, in turn, makes additional input more comprehensible. Mere exposure to language is insufficient. Learners must take notice of key features of the language to get the maximum benefit out of it.

How do we comprehend spoken language? One model is called ‘bottom-up’ approach. According to this view, we piece together a message by first understanding the smallest units of language - sounds. Then we hear the sound sequences together to form words. Our knowledge of words enables us to understand phrases and sentences, and finally an entire passage. An alternative view is known as ‘top-down’ approach. In this model, based on our knowledge of the topic and situation, we can figure out the specific meaning of a passage; and the sentences, phrases and words that form the message.

Current thinking suggests an ‘interactive’ model, in which listeners simultaneously use both top-down and bottom-up strategies. One strategy compensates for the gaps in the other, until the entire message is understood.

You are aware that there are many types of listening. Sometimes we listen for the general meaning of a message and sometimes for specific information. At times, listening is a one-way process (e.g. a lecture or a movie), and at other times it is a two-way process and involves both listening and speaking as in a piece of conversation. Sometimes, listening entails mainly information exchange. At other times, listening may be social or emotional in which feelings are more prominent. Now, as practicing teachers, how can we promote listening as a skill in language learning among children? What strategies should we adopt to realise the maximum from listening activities? Let us explore what strategies could work in our classrooms. Try and design your own strategies that suit the local contexts. Here are some tips for you.

- Before administering a listening task, ask students what they know about the topic so that they can recall their prior knowledge. A teacher may also preview vocabulary and ideas prior to listening.
- Following the listening, ask students about the general points of the passage.
- If details are to be recalled, allow students to take notes or work through the handout, if provided.
- Use natural language for a listening passage. It is better to use short pieces of real language at the initial level than artificial teacher-made language.
- Use a variety of listening activities such as one-way and two-way processes through various texts.
- You may chalk out your own strategy for using the audio material. Ask the students to work in pairs, small groups, or individually and play the audio more than once (or even many times) to enhance children's learning. If they take time to complete one task followed by listening, repeat playing so that they can understand it fully.

The texts for the listening activities in this series are drawn from various sources and genres consistent with the interests of learners. Activities followed by each

listening task are given in print accompanying the CD or the cassette. Learners may be given the worksheet before they begin to listen.

Happy Listening

References

- Brown, G. (1992). *Listening to Spoken Language*. 2nd ed. London. Longman.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). *Teaching the Spoken Language*. Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press.
- Rust, M. (1993). *Listening in Language Learning*. London. Longman.

Listening Activity One

1. Worms also Eat Fruit

Mango is a delicious fruit. All of us enjoy eating mangoes. Have you heard anyone say 'I don't like mangoes?' Well, I haven't heard such a remark though there may be an argument over who has a better claim over the fruit of the mango tree. Here is such a dispute. Listen to the story Worms also Eat Fruit.

Long ago there was a big fight between birds and men over mangoes. The men said, "The mangoes belong to us but the birds eat them all up." The birds said, "The mangoes belong to us but the men eat them all up." The men got angry with the birds and the birds got angry with the men. They fought for a long time.

One day, a little boy saw a mango on a tree. He wanted the fruit, but there was a bird sitting near it. So he said to the bird, "That mango is mine. Don't eat it." The bird said, "No it's mine." The boy threw a stone at the bird and hit it. All the birds in the tree got very angry. They said, "The mangoes are ours. We will eat them. We won't let the men eat them." Soon a number of men came there. They said, "We'll kill all the birds."

An old man saw the fight. He said, "Don't fight. There are enough mangoes in the trees. The birds can have one half of them and the men can have the other half."

The men asked, "Which half is ours?"

The birds asked, "Which half is ours?"

The old man said, "Birds fly to the top of the tree. So they can have the fruit from the top branches. The men can have the mangoes from the branches near the ground. They can reach them easily."

The birds and the men agreed to this wise judgement. Suddenly they heard a voice, and it said, "Which fruit are ours? We can reach all parts of the tree. So tell us, which ones are ours?"

The birds and the men heard the voice and looked around. Just then a worm came out of a mango. The worm said to the old man, “You gave the fruit on the top branches to the birds and the fruit on the branches near the ground to the men. You forgot us, the worms. We also eat fruit. Which part is ours?”

The old man was very surprised. He did not know the answer.

The fight still goes on. Men say, “The birds eat up all the mangoes.” The birds say, “The men eat up all the mangoes.”

And the worms live quietly in the mangoes and eat them.

1. State the reason. (more than one reason may be correct)

(i) There was a dispute between men and birds because

- a. Men said that mangoes belonged to them but the birds ate them all up.
- b. Men said that mangoes belonged to all.
- c. The birds said that mangoes were theirs.
- d. Camel also said that the mango belonged to all

(ii) The worm claimed that the mango belonged to it because

- a. it lives in mangoes and eats them up.
- b. it does not get any part of the mango.
- c. it is not given anything to eat.

2. Was the old man’s Judgement correct? Yes/No

Listening Activity Two

Whose Horse was It?

Have you found yourself in a situation where you acted as judge to settle a dispute? Now listen to the story of a strange dispute and how it was resolved.

One day a young man was riding his horse into town. Near the town gate, on the roadside, he saw a beggar.

“Sir,” the beggar cried out, “please, will you take me on your horse to the town market? I am lame.”

The kind young man agreed. He put the lame beggar behind him on the horse and rode into town.

They stopped at the market place and the young man said to the beggar, “You may get off here.”

“But I don’t want to,” said the beggar. “You get off my horse. I want to go on.”

“Your horse? What do you mean?” said the young man in great surprise. “This horse belongs to me. Please get off my horse.”

“Your horse?” asked the beggar in a loud voice.

“Yes. if its is not mine, whose is it then?” said the young man. “Get off. Or I’ll take you to the King’s Officer.”

“All right, let’s go to him,” said the beggar.

So they went to the King’s Officer. The young man said to the Officer, “Sir, I was riding to town on my horse. On the way this man stopped me and asked for a ride to the town market. He is lame. So I took pity on him and brought him to the market. Now he says, ‘The horse is mine. I won’t get off.’ Please help me get back my horse from him.”

“He is a thief and a liar, sir,” said the beggar, “and he is trying to steal my horse from me. I am lame and cannot walk easily. So I bought this horse for myself.”

The King's Officer looked at both the men. Who was the thief? Whose was the horse? He did not know.

"Sir, may I ask him a question?" said the young man to the Officer.

"Yes," said the Officer, "go on."

The young man took off his turban and with it quickly covered the horse's head. He then said to the beggar, "This horse is yours, you say. And you know the horse well. Now answer my question. Which of its eyes is blind, the left eye or the right eye?"

"Er ... er ... er ... the right eye," answered the beggar.

"The right eye? Are you sure?"

"I am sorry, I mean the left eye."

The young man now said to the King's Officer, "Sir, my horse's eyes are all right. The horse isn't blind in its right eye or in its left eye. Please take the cloth off and look at its eyes."

The King's Officer took off the cloth from the horse's head and looked at its eyes. Both the eyes were all right.

"You are a rogue," he said to the beggar. "Come with me. I will put you in prison."

1. Now with your friend/partner complete the following.
 - (i) The young man met _____ on his way to town.
 - (ii) The riders stopped at _____.
2. Did the beggar get off the horse at the market place? Yes/No
3. Each man said, "This horse is mine." Whom did they go to for judgement?
4. What was the question the young man asked the beggar?

Listening Activity Three

The Lost Necklace

What will you do when you lose your pen or a book? Would you suspect someone of stealing it? What will be your feeling when you come to know that the person you suspected has not taken it? Here is such a situation. Listen to it.

One morning Mrs Pratap, a rich lady, found her expensive gold necklace missing. She looked for it in every room in her house, but did not find it. Then she thought of Mr Sio, who was a very clever man. He often helped people to find missing things.

Mr Sio lived in a neighbouring street. Mrs Pratap went to see him in his house.

“Mr Sio, I lost my gold necklace and can’t find it. Please help me to find it.” she said.

“Where did you lose it?” asked Mr Sio.

“In my house,” answered Mrs Pratap.

“All right,” said Mr Sio, “let’s go there.”

In a few minutes they were at Mrs Pratap’s house.

Mr Sio went round the house and looked all the rooms. Then he came back to Mrs Pratap and said, “Now, please answer my question.” Mrs Pratap said, “All right.”

“When did you last wear the necklace?” asked Mr Sio.

“I wore it yesterday morning,” said Mrs Pratap. “I went by taxi to a friend’s house. I stayed there for about two hours and came back at noon. Then I took off the necklace and put it on the shelf in my bedroom.”

“When did you see the necklace again?” Mr Sio asked.

“I saw it late in the evening. It was on the same shelf,” said Mrs Pratap. “I wanted to put it back in my box, but I forgot.”

“Have you any guests in the house?” asked Mr Sio.

“Yes, I have,” said Mrs Pratap, “My nephew and niece are staying with me.”

Mr Sio then said, “Let me see your bedroom once again.”

Mrs Pratap took him to her bedroom. Mr Sio first looked at the shelf in the room. Then he walked round the room. He stood near the window and asked, “What time did you open this window in the morning?”

“At 6 o’clock,” said Mrs Pratap.

“When did you find the necklace missing?” asked Mr Sio.

“At 8 o’clock.” Answered Mrs Pratap.

“Did any of your servants come into this room this morning?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Pratap. “The maid-servant did. But she came at half past eight, and she is an honest woman.”

Mr Sio wrote down all Mrs Pratap’s answers in a small notebook. He then stood near the window and looked out for some time. Then he said, “Excuse me, Mrs Pratap. I’ll be back in a minute.” He quickly walked out of the house.

Mrs Pratap stood at the window and looked out.

Mr Sio climbed a tree and stood on a branch.

There was a crow’s nest on it. Mr Sio put his hand into the nest and took out something. It was Mrs Pratap’s necklace!

Mr Sio gave the necklace to Mrs Pratap. She was very happy.

“Please be careful and don’t lose it again,” said Mr Sio.

“Don’t leave any of your jewels on the shelf. A crow can fly in through the window and take it away.”

Mrs Pratap said, “Thank you very much, Mr Sio, I will.”

Having listened to the story of the lost necklace, let us now complete the following paragraph based on your listening of the story.

Mrs Pratap lost her _____ in _____. She looked for it in _____. She could not find it there. So she went to _____ and asked his help to find it. Mr Sio first _____ the house and looked out for some time. He found _____.

Listening Activity Four

Happy September

Do you know the meaning of your name and names of your friends? If you know tell it to your friend what your name means and ask the meaning of your friend's name. Have you ever heard any strange names? If so, tell your friend. Can anyone be named as January or February, the names of the month? Now you will come to know many such strange names as you listen.

Once there was a king. He had two daughters. He called them Night and Day. After a few years his wife had two more daughters. He now changed the names of his first two daughters and called his four daughters Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

After some time his wife had three more daughters. He now named his seven daughters after the days of the week Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Then his wife had another daughter. The king now changed all their names and named them after the months January, February, March, April, May, June, July and August. Then his wife had a ninth daughter and he called her September. His wife didn't use the other names of the months.

September was her father's pet child. One day he gave her a present. It was a beautiful green and red parrot. She put the parrot in a silver cage and became very fond of it.

She went near the cage every day and talked to the parrot. But the parrot didn't talk at all. Sometimes it looked very sad and then September felt said too. Her sisters didn't like the parrot. They often said to her, "Your parrot is a stupid bird. It can't talk. And, of course, it can't sing. Open the cage and let it go."

But September said, "I love my parrot. I'll never leave it go"

One by one all her sisters married and went away. Now September was alone.

One day, suddenly, the parrot talked. It said, "Will you marry me?"

"Oh, what did you say?" September asked in great surprise.

The parrot said once again, "Please, will you marry me?"

"Yes," said the princess, "but who are you?"

At once the parrot changed into a handsome prince. He had beautiful clothes on and wore lots of jewels.

September looked at him with wonder. "Tell me," she said, "Who are you?"

"I am a prince. I'll tell you my story," the prince answered. He then told September this story.

One day I was hunting in the forest. I saw a deer and killed it with an arrow. The deer was an old woman's pet. She cursed me and said, "You are a wicked man. You killed my deer. I will punish you for this."

At once I became a parrot. "Have pity on me," I begged the old woman. "I'll never kill animals again, I promise you. Please change me back into a man."

The old woman said, "I can't do that. You'll be a parrot for seven years. Then one day a king's daughter will agree to marry you. At that time you will become a prince again."

All these years I waited. "Which girl will agree to marry a parrot?" I thought sadly. But you agreed. So I am a prince again.

Princess September married the prince and they lived happily for a long time.

1. Based on your listening of the story of Happy September complete the following table. You can ask your teacher to play again so that you can complete the table as you listen to the story.

Number of daughter	Names
Two	
Four	
_____	Monday, Tuesday, _____, _____, _____, _____, Saturday
Nine	

2. Now discuss with your friend and find

- (i) How many times did the king change the names of the first two daughters?
two times / three times / four times
- (ii) How many times did he change the name of his fourth daughter?
two times / three times / four times
- (iii) What is the name of his sixth daughter?
- (iv) What present did the king give September?
- (v) Who changed the prince into a bird?
- (vi) The prince remained a bird for _____ .

Listening Activity Five

The Miser

We often make fun of misers, who do not want to spend their money. Are you a miser or a generous person? Listen to this story and decide yourself.

Once there was a very rich man. He was a miser. He ate very cheap food and spent very little money. He lent money to small shopkeepers at a high interest. In this way he earned a lot of money. Every morning he went out to see the shopkeepers and came home at midday.

The miser had a watchman to look after his house. The watchman lived in a hut near the gate. He liked fish, and his wife cooked it for him every day. The watchman told his wife, "Cook the fish before midday. Our master will be out then. He doesn't eat meat or fish and he will not like the smell of fish."

One day the master came home early. He walked past the watchman's hut and caught the smell of fish. It was nice smell and he liked it very much.

That afternoon he called the watchman and asked him, "What were you cooking today?"

The watchman said quickly, "I won't do it again, sir. Please excuse me."

The miser said, "Don't be afraid. I am not angry. What was your wife cooking? Please tell me."

The watchman said, "We were cooking fish."

The miser said, "Please cook it every day. I like the smell very much."

The watchman and his wife thought, "Our master is mad." But they cooked fish every day.

After a month, one evening, the watchman and his wife came to see their master.

“Sir, you like the smell of fish,” the watchman said to his master, “so we cook it every day. But fish is not cheap. It is very dear. It costs us a lot of money. I earn only thirty rupees a month. So please give us money for the fish.”

The miser thought for a while. Then he said, “Oh, all right. Wait here.” He went into his room and shut the door behind him. He took out some silver coins from a bag. He dropped them one by one on the floor. The watchman and his wife heard the tinkle of the coins and were very happy. They said, “He is going to give us all that money.”

After some time their master came out and sat down on a chair. He then asked the watchman and his wife, “Did you hear the tinkle of the coins?”

“Yes, sir, we did,” said the watchman.

“Did you enjoy it?” asked the miser.

“Yes, sir,” said the watchman and his wife.

The miser then said, “All right. I enjoyed the smell of your fish and you enjoyed the sound of my coins. I don’t ask for your fish, so you don’t ask for my money. Now go away.”

Isn’t it interesting? Misers are always clever. Based on your listening of the story, say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the following questions.

1. Did the rich man spend a lot of money? Yes / No
2. Did he earn his money? Yes / No
3. Did the watchman’s wife cook fish everyday? Yes / No
4. Did the miser like the smell of fish? Yes / No
5. Did the master give them money? Yes / No

Listening Activity Six

The Camel and the Cunning Fox

The fox is known for its cunningness. The lion is known for his ferociousness. What are the leopard, the wolf and the camel known for? Tell your friend before you listen to the story. Now listen to the story.

Once there was a lion. He was the king of the forest. He had three ministers, a leopard, a wolf and a fox. One day a merchant's camel lost his way and came into the forest. The leopard, the wolf and the fox brought him to their master. At first, the camel was afraid of the lion. But the lion liked him and soon the two became friends. The lion made him one of his ministers.

The leopard was strong and beautiful, the wolf was brave and the fox was very clever. The lion liked all three of them. The camel was not brave, beautiful or clever. He was ugly. But he was honest and the lion loved him for that.

But the leopard, the wolf and the fox hated the new minister. "The king is very fond of his new minister," they said. "He does not love us now. The camel is our enemy!"

One day the lion fell ill. Four weeks he lay ill in his cave. He called the leopard, the wolf and the fox and said, "I am very hungry. I cannot go out to hunt. Please get me something to eat." So the three ministers went out to hunt. The camel was not a hunter, so he stayed behind.

On their way, the fox said to the leopard and the wolf, "Listen to me. Let's not go and hunt. We shall kill our enemy, the camel. He has a big body. There will be enough flesh for the king and for us too."

"But the lion is very fond of the camel," said the leopard. "We can't kill him."

"I have a plan," said the fox. He whispered his plan in the ears of the leopard and the wolf.

“That is a good plan,” said both his friends.

They came back to the lion in the evening. They bowed to him and said, “Sir, we hunted all day, but got nothing.”

“What shall I do?” said the lion. “I am dying of hunger.”

Now the cunning fox said to the leopard and the wolf, “Our king is dying of hunger. You are hungry too. Please kill me and eat my flesh. I will give my life to save you all.”

“Not at all,” said the leopard and the wolf together. “You want to save our lives; but you have a small body, and your flesh will not be enough for the three of us!”

Then the wolf said, “Please kill me and let the king eat my flesh. I will gladly die to save him.”

“No,” said both the fox and the leopard at once. “You have a small body too, and your flesh will not be enough for the three of us. And we don’t want to lose you.”

The leopard now bowed to the lion and said, “Please kill me and eat me.”

“No,” said the lion. “I will not kill my faithful ministers just to save my life!”

The poor camel did not know the aim of his enemies. He now bowed before the lion and said, “Sir please kill me and eat me.”

At once the fox, the wolf and the leopard fell on him and killed him.

1. Now complete the sentences given to you in the worksheet based on your listening to the story.

(i) The lion had _____ ministers. They were _____, _____ and wolf.

(ii) _____ loved the camel but _____ did not love the camel.

(iii) _____ went to hunt for the _____ but the _____ did not go with them.

2. What do you feel about the Leopard, the wolf and the camel? Now say 'Yes' or 'No' to the following questions. If you wish you may ask your teacher to play the story again.

(i) Did the camel go for food hunting? Yes/No

(ii) Did the three ministers go for hunting? Yes / No

(iii) Was the camel honest? Yes / No

(iv) Did the fox do the good thing? Yes / No

(v) Was the lion responsible for the death of the camel? Yes / No

Listening Activity Seven

Six Wise Men

This is the story of six men who think they are always wise. Do you agree with them? Listen to their story before you decide.

Once six wise men went on a journey together. On their way there was a deep river. There was no boat; so they swam across the river. They all got safely to the other bank.

“Are we all safe?” asked one of the wise men.

“Let us count and see,” said the others.

The first man counted, “One, two, three, four, five,” and said, “Look! One of us is missing. There are only five of us here.” He counted only the others.

“You are silly,” said the second wise man. “Let me count. One, two, three, four, five. Yes, you are right! God! God! One of us is missing. We are only five now!” He too counted only the others.

“I’ll count and see,” said the third man. “One, two, three, four, five. My God! There were six of us on the other bank. There are only five here. One of us is drowned.”

Now the fourth man counted. He too said, “We are only five. What shall we do?” Then the fifth and the sixth man counted. They all said, “We are only five. One of us is drowned!”

And they all sat down on the bank and cried. “One of us is drowned. What shall we do? Oh! Oh! Our dear friend! What shall we do?”

After some time the leader of the wise men said, “We started on our journey on a bad day. So we lost one of us. We will not go on now. Let’s go home.” The others agreed.

The wise men swam across the river and got back to the other bank. A man from their village saw them and asked them, "Aren't you going on your journey?"

"No, we are not," said the leader of the wise men. "We had an accident. We lost one of us in the river. So we are going back home."

"Who did you lose?" the villager asked.

"We don't know," said the leader. "We were six. Now we are only five."

The villager counted them. They were six and not five. He thought, "These wise men are really foolish. Each one of them counted only the others. So he counted only five. I will teach these fools to count."

He then told them, "Stand in a line, and I'll tell you your number."

The villager went to the first man, gave a rap on his head with his knuckles and counted 'one'. He gave a rap on the head of the second man and counted 'two'. In this way he came to the sixth man, gave a rap on his head and counted 'six'.

"You see now, you are six and not five," he said.

"Hey, you are right!" they all shouted in great joy. "Thank you very much, sir. Thank you very much."

The leader now told them, "The missing man is back with us now, so let's go on our journey."

Have you now come to a decision? Are they wise? Everyone knows what they are.

Now tell your friend whether the following statements are 'true' or 'false'.

1. The six wise men swam across the river and one of them was drowned.
2. Each of the wise men counted only the others.
3. The wise men were really foolish.
4. The villager was a fool.
5. The leader of the wise men said, "The missing man is back with us now," and he was right.

Listening Activity Eight

Listen and Enjoy

Reciting poems and rhymes is a wonderful experience. When you recite a poem, you begin to enjoy the music of words and the movement of rhythm. A good poem provides a good experience of a special kind of language use. Poems and rhymes recited with feeling and understanding make for a delightful experience, and also promote language learning and a sense of appreciation.

Come let us recite the poem There's a lovely Park

There's a Lovely Park

There's a lovely park,
A lovely, lovely park,
A beautiful, lovely park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around,
And the green grass grows around.

There's lovely tree,
A lovely, lovely tree,
A beautiful, lovely tree;
The tree is in the park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around,
And the green grass grows around.

There's a lovely branch,
A lovely, lovely branch,
A beautiful, lovely branch;
The branch is on the tree;
The tree is in the park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around,
And the green grass grows around.

There's a lovely nest,
A lovely, lovely nest,
A beautiful, lovely nest;
The nest is on the branch;
The branch is on the tree;
The tree is in the park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around,
And the green grass grows around.

There's a lovely egg,
A lovely, lovely egg,
A beautiful, lovely egg;
The egg is in the nest;
The nest is on the branch;
The branch is on the tree;
The tree is in the park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around,
And the green grass grows around.

There's a lovely bird,
A lovely, lovely bird,
A beautiful, lovely bird;
The bird is on the egg;
The egg is in the nest;
The nest is on the branch;
The branch is on the tree;
The tree is in the park;
And the green grass grows around
Around, around, around
And the green grass grows around.

Now come and sing with me. Repeat the song.

Listening Activity Nine

The Butterfly

Let us recite another poem **The Butterfly**

Butterfly, butterfly,
Flutter by, flutter by;
Up and down and low and high,
Butterfly, flit and fly.

Little flower, little flower,
You're waiting by, waiting by,
Fair and fresh in the morning hour,
With shining eyes, and so shy.

Little flower, and butterfly,
You will meet, by and by.

Listening Activity Ten

Here is a poem, which is a riddle. Listen to it.

There's a little green house,
And in the little green house
There's a little brown house,
And in the little brown house
There's a little white house,
And in the little white house
There's a little pool

Now Lets 'do' or 'solve' Activity.

Can you guess what it is? Ask your friend sitting next to you.
