

# SKILLS FOR IELTS

## LISTENING SKILLS

The IELTS examination tests your ability to understand spoken language in a variety of social and academic contexts. The test consists of four graded recorded sections each with 10 questions and it takes about 30 minutes to complete. As you hear the recording **once** only, success will depend on knowing what information to listen for. You are not expected to have any specialist knowledge but you should be able to deal with a range of topics and a number of different voices.

The test measures how well you can manage the following skills:

- ▶ Listening for specific information
- ▶ Listening for main ideas and supporting information
- ▶ Understanding the speaker's opinion

Each of the four sections in the listening test may have up to three different types of question testing a range of skills.

### Developing listening skills 1

#### Listening for specific information

- ▶ **What does 'listening for specific information' mean?**

When you listen for specific information, you are listening for key details; for example, to help you make a decision or complete a task.

- Exercise 1** ▶ *Imagine you are listening to the following. What kind of information might you want to listen for in each case?*


*Example: a radio advert for a mobile phone: price, name of store, accessories*

- 1 the weather forecast
- 2 a radio sports bulletin
- 3 a news item about a storm
- 4 a recorded message at a cinema

- ▶ **How is your ability to listen for specific information tested in IELTS?**

In the exam, you may need to show your understanding of specific information by:

- filling in gaps in a set of notes or summary
- writing short answers to questions
- completing a form
- completing a grid or chart
- answering multiple choice questions
- picking words from a list.

**Exercise 2** ▷ a  Read the questions below and decide what type of information you need to listen out for. Will you need to write something or choose an answer?

Now listen to **Extracts 1 and 2** and answer Questions 1, 2 and 3.  
[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2143&filename=1\\_Extract1.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2143&filename=1_Extract1.mp3)


[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2144&filename=2\\_Extract2.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2144&filename=2_Extract2.mp3)

**Concert details**

Full price tickets:                 **\$35.00**  
Student price: 1 .....

Concert begins at: 2 .....

- 3** When does the man want to start the English course?
- A March
  - B April
  - C September

b  Look at Questions 4, 5 and 6 in the box below. Underline the key words in each question, that is, the words which tell you what information to listen out for. For example, the key word in Question 4 is 'work', so you need to listen for what job the man does.

Now listen to **Extract 3** and answer questions 4–6.

[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2145&filename=3\\_Extract3.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2145&filename=3_Extract3.mp3)

- 4** What kind of work does the man do? .....
- 5** What product does the man ask about? .....
- 6** What item does the man give the woman? .....

**Exam Tip**


The words you need are on the recording. Remember, you cannot use more than three words in a short answer question.

**Exercise 3** ▷ a Look at the statements and possible answers below. Turn them into questions by changing the stem. The first one is done for you.

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 The library opens at | 2 The police arrived by |
| A 9.00a.m.             | A car.                  |
| B 10.00a.m.            | B motor bike.           |
| C 11.00a.m.            | C helicopter.           |

*What time does the library open?*

- 3 The graph shows the
- A number of people in prison in Australia.
  - B main reason for people going to prison.
  - C number of prisons in Australia.
- 4 Louis Braille was born in
- A 1809.
  - B 1819.
  - C 1829.

b  Now listen to **Extract 3** again and answer Questions 7 and 8.

[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2146&filename=4\\_Extract3.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2146&filename=4_Extract3.mp3)

- 7 The woman washes her hair
- A once a week.
  - B twice a week.
  - C more than twice a week.
- 8 The woman chooses her shampoo based on
- A price.
  - B design.
  - C advertising.

How was the answer expressed on the recording? Were the same words used as in the question?

### Exam Tip


You are not always listening for the words used in the question. IELTS tests your ability to make sense of what you hear – not just to listen for key words. Sometimes one of the speakers will ask the question for you in a slightly different form so listen out for this.


## Developing listening skills 2

### Listening for main ideas and supporting information

#### ▶ What does 'listening for main ideas' mean?

Imagine you are at a party. You join a group of people who are already talking to each other. The first thing you do is try to work out what they are talking about. What is the topic? And then, what is the main idea? You can get an idea of the topic from the vocabulary they are using. The main idea is the main point or message.

**Exercise 4** ▷ a  Listen to **Extract 4**. You will hear four different mini-talks; in each case identify the main idea and complete the table below. Sometimes the main idea will be explicitly stated, sometimes it will be in the overall message.

b  Listen to **Extract 4** again and pause the recording after each speaker. Make notes of some of the supporting information. Look at the example for the first mini-talk below.

[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2147&filename=5\\_Extract4.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2147&filename=5_Extract4.mp3)

	Main Ideas	Supporting Information
1	the cost of the project	\$43 million since 1990
2		
3		
4		

► **How is your understanding of main ideas and supporting information tested in the IELTS exam?**

In the exam, you may need to show your understanding of main ideas and supporting information by:

- answering short questions
- answering multiple choice questions
- filling in gaps in a set of notes
- choosing a word from a list
- completing a diagram, a chart or a grid
- summary completion.

**Exercise 5** ► a  Read Question 9. Is this question testing main ideas or supporting information? Now listen to **Extract 5** and answer the question.  
[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2148&filename=6\\_Extract5.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2148&filename=6_Extract5.mp3)

**Exam Tip**

When information is deliberately repeated in an IELTS listening, it may be the information you need. How often did the speaker repeat the main idea?

Answer the questions using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS**.

9 What is the subject of the man's talk? .....

b  Another task that tests your understanding of main ideas is multiple choice. For example, in Question 10 below, you must decide which of the 3 options best sums up what the man says. Listen to **Extract 6** and answer the question.

[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2149&filename=7\\_Extract6.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2149&filename=7_Extract6.mp3)

Circle the appropriate letter A–C

- 10 The shoes were designed to ...
- A reduce the pain of marathon running.
  - B increase the athletes' speed.
  - C help old people walk more easily.

**Exercise 6** ► a The IELTS may use summary completion to test your understanding of supporting details. The words in the summary will give a brief version of what you hear. Read the summary below. What is the main idea? Underline the words that tell you. What details do you need?


Now listen to **Extract 7** and answer Questions 11–14.  
[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2150&filename=8\\_Extract7.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2150&filename=8_Extract7.mp3)

Complete the summary using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** or **A NUMBER** for each answer.

**The Flagship of the Royal Fleet**

The *Mary Rose* sank in the year **11** ..... The king stood on the shore and watched her go down. The ship then lay on the sea bed for **12** ..... years. In 1982 she was **13** ..... and brought back to dry land. By analysing the **14** ..... of the ship, scientists believe they are closer to learning why she sank.

►► Now go to Test 3, Questions 36–40, and try a summary completion task.

b  Another way of testing your understanding of supporting detail is selecting from a list. Listen to **Extract 8** and answer Question 15 below.

[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2151&filename=9\\_Extract8.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2151&filename=9_Extract8.mp3)

### Exam Tip

You have to get both answers correct to get your mark.

Circle **TWO** letters A–G.

15 Which **TWO** of the following items must the girl take with her?

- |                       |              |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| A hiking boots        | E gloves     |
| B pair of shorts      | F tent       |
| C woollen jumper      | G flashlight |
| D inflatable mattress |              |

### Developing listening skills 3

## Understanding the speaker's opinion

### ► How can you tell opinions from facts?

An opinion is a point of view; it differs from a fact in that it cannot be proved true. Some people make their opinions sound like facts, but usually when people give a verbal opinion, they use phrases such as *'I believe, I think, In my opinion ...'*.

**Exercise 7** ► Which of the following are opinions? Which are facts? How do you know?

- 1 As far as I can see, the increase in petrol prices is due to the government's taxation policy.
- 2 These days all children can be immunised against diseases such as measles and mumps. Here's a leaflet with the information you require.
- 3 I'm sure that if children aren't taught how to socialise when they are young, they will have difficulty getting on with other adults later on in life.
- 4 The law forbids people from driving faster than 70km an hour in most parts of the city.

### ► How is understanding speaker's opinion tested in the IELTS Listening Module?

Opinion is usually only tested in Sections 3 and 4 of the listening test. The most common method is through multiple-choice questions as these can provide you with a choice of opinions from which to select the correct answer.

**Exercise 8** ►  Look at Questions 16–17 below. Are you listening for an opinion or a fact? Which words tell you? Listen to **Extracts 9–10** and answer the questions.  
[http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2152&filename=10\\_Extract9and10.mp3](http://jeisee.com/tten/text/download/sound/?id=2152&filename=10_Extract9and10.mp3)

16 The student thinks that the building

- A is very cleverly designed.
- B is adequate for its purpose.
- C has a number of design faults.

17 What is the speaker's view of bicycles?

- A They will not change much in the future.
- B They should be designed to be more practical.
- C They can cover greater distances than in the past.

►► Now go to Test 1, Questions 8–9, and try a selecting task.