

WEEK 3: Listening**STEP 3.6 – Tips to prepare for the Listening Test**

Good afternoon everyone, welcome back for the second session in our In-Service Training course on teaching IELTS Preparation. This afternoon, I'd like to spend some time looking at some of the steps and activities you can encourage your students to take part in outside of class in order to develop their language skills and improve their chances of achieving the desired results in the test itself.

We're going to start with listening skills by looking at some ideas for general listening practice, then look at specific skills required for the test, then we'll work in groups to evaluate a range of possible resources. Listening is one area in particular where learners can practise extensively and can achieve significant improvements working autonomously so it's a good place to start from. Some students - and teachers - make the mistake of simply relying on IELTS listening practice tests and activities to help in test preparation. These are useful of course for familiarising learners with the test format, task types and timings, but they're not enough on their own to build their wider skills. In order to do that, it's necessary to practise more extensive listening – both in a general context, such as TV or radio programmes, interviews and so on, and in a more academic context – lectures, documentaries, panel discussions and more. With the greater availability of online resources, smartphones and apps this has become easier and cheaper than ever before. It's now possible to listen to, download and practise with a huge range of resources, from podcasts up to full length university programmes, often including useful materials such as transcripts, subtitles or vocabulary resources. You will find a list of suggested resources at the back of the training manual and I hope during the rest of the session we will be able to add some more to that list.

It's a good idea to use these activities to help your students to develop personalised plans and strategies for their listening development. Try a few different activities using the online resources in class and ask them to choose one or two which they feel are most interesting or useful for them. Then you can explore together different ways in which they feel they could use them to prepare for the challenges of the listening test itself. Some things may be best just for enjoyment, and that's fine, but others might be useful for specific sections of the test or specific skills like note-taking, spelling and so on. Whether their interests lie in sport, soap operas, biotechnology, international human rights law or any other area, it doesn't matter - they will be able to find resources to listen to on these topics with a range of accents, and often with transcripts or subtitles which they can refer to after they've listened. These in turn can help them work on vocabulary, collocations, grammar, spelling and so on. If you are able to find just a few resources which they are genuinely interested in and motivated to listen to and understand, then using them to practise specific exam skills will seem like less of a chore and will be all the more effective for it.

Now, let's move on to look at what specific challenges the test presents. First of all, accents. Different voices are used so learners need to practise listening to Australian, British, New Zealand and North American accents at least. It's important to listen to real-life monologues such as lectures, presentations and so on, as well as natural conversations between groups of two or more people.

A range of skills are tested, including understanding the main ideas and specific information, recognising opinions and attitudes of speakers and following the development of their arguments.

The task types include multiple choice questions, labelling plans, maps or diagrams, filling in forms or completing tables or flow-charts and giving short answers. So let's look at some of the specific resources mentioned at the back of your training manual to see how we can use those to practise those specific skills. Let's work together in groups to evaluate them and come up with suggestions on how they could be used effectively in class and at home. If you could turn to page number...