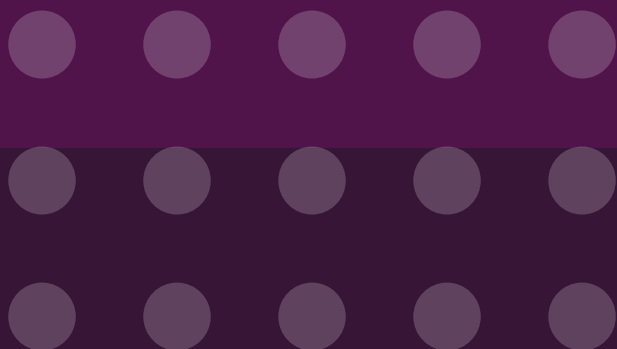


How to prepare for ESOL Skills for Life

Speaking and Listening Award – Level 1



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Trinity College London

ESOL Skills for Life

ESOL Skills for Life courses and assessments play an important role in supporting adults who want to live, work and study in the UK, as they reflect the real communication demands learners face every day. Trinity College London's ESOL Skills for Life qualifications are designed for a diverse test taker population, including migrants, refugees, international workers and parents returning to education, many of whom need English not only for employment but also for accessing services, building social connections and participating confidently in their communities.

Preparing for these exams encourages learners to develop practical reading, writing, speaking and listening skills that are not only assessed in the qualification but also essential for everyday life in the UK, including healthcare, housing, education and workplace communication. In this way, ESOL Skills for Life supports learners' progression from basic survival English towards fuller participation in UK society, helping them develop the independence, confidence and language skills needed not only to live in the UK but to thrive there. At Level 1, the focus shifts towards more independent and flexible communication in work, training and community contexts, including explaining ideas clearly, managing problems, responding flexibly in less predictable situations and participating more confidently in professional and social interactions.

This guide has been produced to support teachers preparing learners for the Level 1 Speaking and Listening award. It outlines the key speaking and listening skills and subskills assessed at this level and explains how they connect to real-life communication demands. The guide supports teachers in selecting and adapting classroom activities to practise these skills effectively. It also provides structured activities linked to the speaking and listening tasks in the Trinity ESOL Skills for Life test, helping teachers build learners' confidence, develop exam awareness and strengthen transferable communication skills.

Framework for ESOL Skills for Life teaching and learning

The ESOL Skills for Life examination suite has five levels mapped to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (AECC): Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2. These levels provide a developmental framework for teaching and learning progression from beginner to advanced levels of competency in English.

Model of speaking and listening literacy (from the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum)

- ▶ Speak to communicate
- ▶ Engage in discussion
- ▶ Listen and respond – including interactive and independent listening skills

Literacy contexts (from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum)

- ▶ Educational and training, in which a person is engaged in organised learning either in or outside an educational institution. This context can include all learning activities from academic studies to hobby courses.
- ▶ Domestic and everyday life, including a range of contexts a person can encounter in daily living, such as shopping or going to the dentist.

- ▶ Leisure, including socialising with friends, going to leisure facilities or attending organised events.
- ▶ Citizen and community, including participating in activities that are of interest to local communities, such as charity fundraising or expressing concern over council plans to reduce/remove services.
- ▶ Using ICT in social roles.
- ▶ Economic activity, including paid and unpaid work.

Level 1 Speaking and Interactive Listening

Teaching speaking and interactive listening at Level 1

At Level 1, speaking should be taught as a tool for communication rather than as a test of grammatical accuracy. Learners are expected to communicate with greater clarity, control and independence.

In real-life situations, successful communication depends on whether the speaker can be understood, respond appropriately and manage interaction, including dealing with unexpected changes. At Level 1, learners should begin to do this with less support and greater confidence.

Teachers should focus on helping learners to:

- ▶ make themselves clearly understood, even when language is not fully accurate
- ▶ use strategies to explain meaning when they do not know a word
- ▶ respond to others and maintain interaction more independently
- ▶ develop ideas beyond short responses, adding reasons and examples
- ▶ adapt language to suit the situation (for example, formal and informal contexts).

The level of accuracy required depends on the purpose of the interaction. For example:

- ▶ in informal situations (for example, Task 4: Discussion), fluency, participation and clarity of ideas are most important
- ▶ in more formal situations (for example, Task 2: Role-play), greater control of language and clarity may be needed.

At Level 1, learners benefit from practice that builds independence, develops confidence in extended speaking and encourages flexibility in interaction.

How speaking strategies develop across levels

Across the ESOL Skills for Life Speaking and Listening assessments, learners are not simply expected to speak more. They are expected to participate in a wider range of interactions, respond more flexibly and develop their ideas with increasing clarity, accuracy and awareness of audience and purpose.

At Entry 1, speaking focuses on very basic communication and participation:

- ▶ giving short responses to simple, direct questions
- ▶ exchanging basic personal information and communicating immediate needs
- ▶ using familiar words, memorised phrases and very simple sentences
- ▶ relying heavily on support from the interlocutor to maintain interaction.

At Entry 2, learners begin to participate more actively in familiar interactions:

- ▶ giving short but more developed responses on familiar topics
- ▶ talking about simple past experiences, future plans and everyday situations
- ▶ asking and answering simple questions to continue interaction
- ▶ using familiar phrases and simple connected sentences with growing confidence.

At Entry 3, learners begin to take more control of spoken interaction:

- ▶ taking part in short discussions on familiar topics
- ▶ giving simple explanations and reasons
- ▶ responding to other speakers' ideas, not just answering questions
- ▶ beginning to organise what they say beyond single sentences.

At Level 1, speaking becomes more purposeful and developed:

- ▶ expressing opinions clearly and giving reasons to support them
- ▶ developing ideas over several turns
- ▶ adapting language depending on context (for example, formal/informal situations)
- ▶ maintaining interaction with less reliance on support.

At Level 2, speaking is extended, flexible and responsive:

- ▶ presenting and justifying viewpoints in a structured way
- ▶ responding spontaneously to others' contributions
- ▶ sustaining extended discussion and negotiation of meaning
- ▶ adapting language, tone and register to suit audience and purpose.

This progression means that teaching needs to move from supported, short exchanges towards independent, sustained interaction, where learners can both express and respond to ideas in a range of real-world contexts.

Assessment categories for Level 1 speaking and interactive listening

These categories are assessed across the three speaking tasks, with different skills becoming more prominent depending on the task type.

Learning outcomes

1. Be able to obtain information from verbal communication
2. Be able to speak English to communicate
3. Be able to convey information
4. Be able to engage in discussion with others

Assessment criteria

- 1.1 Interactive listening
- 2.1 Pronunciation
- 2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy
- 3.1 Coherence
- 3.2 Cohesion
- 4.1 Participation
- 4.2 Expressing opinions
- 4.3 Engaging with others

Progression of speaking and interactive listening strategies: Entry 1 to Level 2

Subskill	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
1.1 Interactive listening	Understand simple questions with support; respond to direct prompts	Understand simple spoken input and respond appropriately	Understand main points and respond appropriately in interaction; ask for clarification if needed	Understand detail and viewpoints; respond appropriately in a range of situations	Interpret meaning, tone and nuance; respond flexibly and appropriately
2.1 Pronunciation	Use basic pronunciation of familiar words; may need repetition	Pronounce familiar words clearly enough to be understood most of the time	Use pronunciation, stress and intonation to support meaning; generally understood without repetition	Use a wider range of pronunciation features to support meaning and clarity	Use clear and flexible pronunciation, stress and intonation to convey meaning and attitude
2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy	Use very basic vocabulary and simple structures with limited control	Use familiar vocabulary and simple grammar with some control	Use simple language appropriate to context; attempt a range of structures; meaning generally clear	Use a wider range of vocabulary and structures with reasonable accuracy; adapt language to context	Use a broad and flexible range of language accurately and appropriately for different contexts
3.1 Coherence	Give very short responses; ideas may be unclear or incomplete	Give short responses with some relevant information	Give short explanations and descriptions with some detail; respond to questions with extended answers	Develop ideas clearly across several turns; give explanations and support ideas with reasons	Present clear, detailed information and develop ideas logically for a given purpose
3.2 Cohesion	Limited ability to link ideas	Use simple linking (for example, and) to connect ideas	Use simple linking words (for example, and, then, because) to connect ideas across sentences	Use a range of linking devices to organise speech clearly	Use a wide range of cohesive devices to structure extended spoken responses
4.1-4.3 Participation, Expressing opinions, Engaging with others	Respond to simple questions with support; limited interaction	Take part in simple exchanges; ask and answer basic questions	Take part in discussions; express simple opinions with reasons; ask questions and respond to others' ideas	Maintain interaction; express and support opinions; manage turn-taking and respond more flexibly	Sustain extended discussion; justify viewpoints; negotiate meaning and respond spontaneously

Classroom resources – Level 1 Speaking and Interactive Listening

Authentic resources for classroom activities

Use real-life resources and materials that reflect the types of interactions learners need outside the classroom, including situations where they must explain, justify and respond flexibly. These can be used for extended discussions, role-plays and problem-solving tasks.

Examples of authentic materials:

- ▶ Appointment and booking systems (for example, platforms, emails, confirmations, changes or problems)
- ▶ Workplace communication (for example, emails, messages, instructions, rotas)
- ▶ Reviews, feedback or short online comments
- ▶ Event information (for example, adverts, websites, booking details)
- ▶ Transport information (for example, delays, changes, journey planning apps)
- ▶ Service information (for example, websites, FAQs, customer queries)

Example contexts

- ▶ Workplace scenarios
 - discussing tasks, responsibilities or problems
 - explaining an issue to a manager or colleague
 - asking for clarification and suggesting solutions
- ▶ Service interactions
 - resolving a problem (for example, incorrect booking, missing item)
 - asking for more detailed information
 - comparing options and making decisions
- ▶ Everyday conversations
 - discussing past experiences and future plans
 - giving opinions and explaining preferences
 - comparing options (for example, holidays, activities, products)
- ▶ Public information contexts
 - planning journeys with different options
 - discussing events and making choices
 - evaluating information (for example, cost, time, convenience)

Web resources

At Level 1, video and audio clips can be used to introduce more complex situations and support discussion and decision-making. These resources can support both speaking and listening development and are most effective when learners respond actively to what they hear through interaction and discussion.

At Level 1, these should be:

- ▶ slightly longer (1-2 minutes)
- ▶ clearly structured
- ▶ based on realistic situations.

Examples

- ▶ short videos showing everyday situations with a problem or decision
- ▶ simple interviews or opinion-based clips
- ▶ short explainers comparing options (for example, places, services)

How to use them

- ▶ pause and ask prediction and opinion questions
- ▶ ask learners to summarise key points before discussing
- ▶ use clips as a starting point for role-play or problem-solving
- ▶ ask learners to agree/disagree and give reasons
- ▶ extend into discussion or decision-making tasks

Classroom-ready resources

(levels indicate the relevant section of the website for Level 1)

- ▶ BBC Bitesize – short videos and prompts for discussion and opinion development
- ▶ Skillsworkshop ESOL (Level 1) – structured speaking activities and functional language and scenarios
- ▶ BBC Learning English (medium, hard) – short clips and dialogues for modelling more developed interaction
- ▶ ESL Discussion Topics – prompts for extended discussion and opinion sharing
- ▶ English Exercises (B2) – controlled practice for developing opinions and reasons

How to adapt authentic resources at Level 1

At Level 1, learners need less support and more opportunities to develop and extend their ideas independently.

Simplify the task, not the situation	Keep the context realistic, but allow for more open-ended responses and decisions
Provide clear speaking goals	Set tasks that require development, for example: - give an opinion and two reasons - compare two options - suggest and justify a solution
Pre-teach key language (selectively)	Focus on: - expressing opinions (for example, 'I think...', 'In my opinion...') - giving reasons (for example, 'because...', 'so...') - agreeing/disagreeing
Use prompts and support (gradually remove to encourage independence)	Provide: - key vocabulary or ideas - discussion prompts
Build in repetition and variation	Repeat tasks with different partners, roles or viewpoints. This helps learners: - develop fluency and spontaneity - refine arguments and explanations - adapt language to different situations
Manage difficult or unexpected situations	Introduce situations where learners need to manage a problem, respond to criticism or deal with an awkward situation, such as: - arriving late or missing something important - asking for more time or help - dealing with a complaint or criticism - plans or information changing unexpectedly Learners practise: - apologising and explaining situations - adapting their ideas or responses - justifying decisions appropriately - suggesting solutions or alternatives - negotiating a way forward

Tip for teachers

Encourage learners to develop their ideas by:

- ▶ giving reasons and examples
- ▶ responding to others' opinions
- ▶ extending the interaction rather than giving short answers.

General teaching strategies for Level 1 speaking and interactive listening

Train learners to match the task to a speaking strategy

At Level 1, learners are developing greater independence and need to adapt their speaking to different purposes and situations.

- ▶ Topic → organise ideas clearly; use linking (for example, and, because, so, then); give opinions with reasons and examples; develop ideas across several turns
- ▶ Role-play → listen for detail; ask relevant questions; use appropriate functional language (for example, polite requests, clarification); respond flexibly to new information
- ▶ Discussion → express and support opinions; respond to others' ideas; agree/disagree; ask questions to develop the discussion

Develop interactive listening as part of speaking

At Level 1, learners need to respond appropriately to what they hear and maintain interaction more independently. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ listen for key information and relevant detail
- ▶ respond directly to what others say
- ▶ show understanding through appropriate reactions
- ▶ ask for clarification or more information when needed.

Encourage development of ideas

A key shift at Level 1 is moving from short responses to more developed spoken contributions. Train learners to:

- ▶ give an opinion and support it with reasons
- ▶ add examples or explanations
- ▶ develop ideas across more than one turn
- ▶ avoid minimal responses.

Support learners with flexible speaking frameworks

Provide structures that help learners organise and extend their ideas, while encouraging flexibility. For example:

- ▶ Opinion + reason + example → *'I think... because... for example...'*
- ▶ Comparison → *'I prefer... because... but...'*
- ▶ Explaining a situation → *'The problem is... so...'*
- ▶ Suggestion → *'We could... because...'*

Build confidence through practice, variation and feedback

Learners benefit from repeated opportunities to speak, with increasing independence.

- Model answers that show how to develop ideas
- Pair and group work with different partners
- Tasks that require slightly different responses each time
- Feedback that focuses on clarity and communication, not just accuracy

Encourage flexibility and response to unexpected situations

At Level 1, learners should begin to adapt their language when situations change. Build this by:

- introducing small changes to tasks (for example, new information, problems, different options)
- encouraging learners to respond and adjust their ideas
- practising follow-up questions and alternative suggestions.

Build UK context familiarity

Use realistic situations that reflect the types of communication learners will need in everyday life, such as:

- workplace communication (for example, discussing tasks, solving problems)
- service interactions (for example, resolving issues, asking for detailed information)
- education and training contexts (for example, asking questions, giving opinions)
- social and community situations (for example, making plans, discussing experiences).

Link speaking and listening practice

At Level 1, successful speaking activities depend on learners listening carefully, responding appropriately and developing interaction more independently.

Encourage learners to:

- listen for key information, opinions and reasons before responding
- respond directly to another speaker's ideas or suggestions
- notice how speakers manage interaction, disagreement and clarification
- ask follow-up questions to continue or develop the discussion
- reuse useful functional language from listening activities in role-plays and discussions.

After listening activities, learners can:

- continue or extend the conversation
- role-play a similar situation with a new problem or change
- respond from a different viewpoint
- discuss possible solutions or alternatives.

This helps learners develop listening, speaking and interaction skills together in less predictable communication situations.

Level 1 Speaking and Interactive Listening review

Task 1: Topic

Learners choose an object or a photo from the Trinity photobank in advance and use it as a starting point for a conversation with the examiner for up to three minutes.

The object or photo acts as a prompt for talking about an achievement or something they are proud of doing. As part of the conversation, learners are expected to explain the process or steps involved, describe what they did and reflect on the experience and how they felt. Topic areas include:

- fixing things (for example, repairing a bicycle tyre)
- building or making things (for example, furniture, crafts)
- home and everyday tasks (for example, cooking, gardening)
- personal care (for example, hair and beauty routines)
- using tools, technology or equipment
- activities, communication or work-related processes.

Learners may begin by introducing what they achieved and why they chose the topic. They should then explain what they did, describe the stages or process involved and respond to questions about the experience and outcome. The examiner will ask questions throughout the task to encourage clarification, reflection and further development.

The task is interactive, so learners need to listen carefully, respond appropriately and adapt or clarify their explanations if needed.

It is important that learners choose a topic they feel confident talking about, so they can explain their ideas clearly, give relevant detail and respond flexibly to questions.

Key skills at Level 1:

- Explain an achievement and describe the process involved
- Organise ideas clearly using stages, reasons or examples
- Develop responses across several turns with detail and reflection
- Respond to questions by clarifying, expanding or reformulating
- Maintain interaction with increasing independence

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can talk about an achievement, explain what they did and develop their ideas clearly within an interactive conversation. The key areas are:

2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy

Learners are expected to use a wider range of spoken English appropriate to the task. Accuracy may not always be perfect, but communication should be clear and effective.

This includes:

- ▶ using a range of vocabulary related to the topic or process
- ▶ using a variety of structures to describe steps, reasons and results
- ▶ adapting language to suit the situation and respond to questions.

3.1 Coherence

Learners need to organise and develop their ideas clearly so that the listener can follow the explanation and understand the achievement being described. This includes:

- ▶ introducing the achievement or experience clearly
- ▶ explaining stages or actions in a logical order
- ▶ giving explanations, reasons, examples and simple reflection
- ▶ responding with developed answers rather than short responses.

3.2 Cohesion

Learners need to connect their ideas so that their explanation and responses are easy to follow. This includes:

- ▶ using a range of linking words (for example, first, then, after that, because, so)
- ▶ showing clear relationships between ideas, actions or stages
- ▶ developing ideas across multiple sentences and turns.

Sample photos



Achievement/experience

- ▶ What did you do?
- ▶ Why did you choose this?
- ▶ Why was it important to you?
- ▶ How did you feel when you finished?

Sequencing/process

- ▶ Can you explain how you did that?
- ▶ What did you do first?
- ▶ What happened next?
- ▶ Was there anything you needed before you started?

Clarification/detail

- ▶ Can you explain that in more detail?
- ▶ Why did you do it that way?
- ▶ Was it difficult at any stage?
- ▶ Is there another way to do it?

Classroom suggestions

1. Choosing and developing an achievement topic

Show learners a range of images or objects (similar to the photobank) and ask them to choose one that connects to something they feel proud of doing or achieving. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ choose a familiar achievement or experience
- ▶ think about what they did and why it was important
- ▶ organise ideas into clear stages or actions.

2. Explaining stages and actions

Give learners a simple task or achievement and ask them to explain:

- ▶ what they did
- ▶ the stages or steps involved
- ▶ the result or outcome.

Encourage learners to use sequencing language (for example, first, then, after that, finally) and focus on clarity and logical order.

3. Extending explanations and reflection

Ask learners to talk about an achievement and extend their answers by:

- ▶ giving reasons (because...)
- ▶ describing problems or challenges
- ▶ reflecting on the result (for example, what they learnt and how they felt).

4. Question and clarification practice

In pairs, one learner talks about an achievement or process and the other asks follow-up questions. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ ask for more detail
- ▶ ask 'why' and 'how' questions
- ▶ respond by clarifying or expanding their answers.

5. Developing interaction

Focus on responding to follow-up questions rather than giving one long explanation. Practise:

- ▶ explaining ideas clearly
- ▶ listening and responding appropriately
- ▶ developing answers across several turns
- ▶ responding to alternative viewpoints or suggestions.

6. Responding to unexpected questions

Introduce small changes or challenges during practice, such as:

- ▶ 'What problem did you have?'
- ▶ 'Would you do anything differently next time?'
- ▶ 'What happened when things didn't go to plan?'

Learners practise adapting their explanations, reflecting on experiences and responding flexibly.

Task 2: Role-play

Learners take part in a one-to-one role-play with the examiner in a formal or semi-formal interaction, set in a real-life context such as work, education, training or services. The role-play lasts three minutes.

The examiner takes on a role (for example, a manager, a supervisor, a service provider), and the learner must interact with them to manage a situation, deal with a problem or resolve an issue.

The task is not known in advance. At Level 1, the interaction involves a more challenging situation, where the learner may need to respond to criticism, explain a problem, justify their actions or negotiate a solution.

Unlike simpler transactional role-plays, this task reflects situations where communication may become difficult, awkward or stressful. The examiner is expected to challenge or criticise the learner as part of the interaction. Learners therefore need to respond appropriately, maintain communication and use functional language to manage the situation effectively.

The exchange requires learners to take an active role in the conversation by:

- responding appropriately to questions and comments
- explaining their situation clearly
- apologising, justifying actions or clarifying misunderstandings where appropriate
- suggesting solutions or alternatives
- adapting to new or unexpected information.

This task reflects real-life situations where learners may need to deal with criticism, resolve problems or explain themselves appropriately in workplace, training or service contexts.

Key skills:

- Respond to questions and criticism with relevant detail
- Explain situations, give reasons and justify actions appropriately
- Use functional language for managing difficult situations (for example, apologising, explaining, suggesting solutions, negotiating)
- Maintain interaction and respond flexibly under challenge or pressure
- Adapt language and responses as the situation develops

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can manage a goal-focused interaction in a challenging situation, using both speaking and listening skills.

1.1 Interactive listening

Learners must listen carefully and respond appropriately, particularly when faced with new or challenging information. This includes:

- understanding detail and the speaker's viewpoint
- responding appropriately to criticism or questions
- asking for clarification when needed
- adjusting responses as the situation develops.

2.1 Pronunciation

Learners need to speak clearly and confidently so that their meaning is understood during interaction. This includes:

- ▶ using clear pronunciation of familiar and topic-related language
- ▶ using stress and intonation to support meaning (for example, to explain, to apologise, to emphasise)
- ▶ maintaining intelligibility without frequent repetition.

2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy

Learners are expected to use a wider range of language appropriate to the situation, including more formal or polite forms where needed. This includes:

- ▶ using a range of vocabulary and structures to explain and justify
- ▶ using functional language for managing situations (for example, apologising, explaining, suggesting solutions)
- ▶ adapting language to suit the context and role.

4.3 Engaging with others

Learners need to take an active role in managing the interaction and moving it towards a resolution. This includes:

- ▶ responding appropriately to questions and comments
- ▶ explaining and justifying their position
- ▶ suggesting solutions or alternatives
- ▶ maintaining interaction and helping resolve the situation.

Sample role-play prompt

Role-play prompt	You work in a supermarket. You have been arriving late to work recently, and your manager wants to talk to you about it. I am your manager.
Examiner notes	▶ Criticise the candidate. ▶ Say what the candidate needs to do to improve the situation.

Classroom suggestions

1. Role-plays with problem-solving focus

Give learners role cards that include a problem or difficulty, not just a simple transaction. For example:

- ▶ you missed an appointment
- ▶ your order is incorrect
- ▶ you are late or unavailable

Learners must:

- ▶ explain the situation
- ▶ respond to questions
- ▶ suggest a solution.

2. Functional language for managing situations

Practise key language for:

- apologising → *'I'm sorry for...'*, *'I apologise for...'*
- explaining → *'The reason is...'*, *'I was... because...'*
- suggesting solutions → *'I can...'*, *'I will...'*, *'Next time I'll...'*

Focus on both meaning and appropriacy.

3. Handling challenge and criticism

Practise short interactions where learners must respond to:

- complaints
- criticism
- warnings.

Encourage learners to:

- stay calm and polite
- give clear explanations
- respond constructively.

4. Developing responses beyond questions

Move beyond question-answer patterns. Train learners to:

- give fuller responses with reasons
- explain their situation clearly
- take initiative in the interaction.

5. Unpredictable role-play practice

Introduce variation during the task (teacher or partner changes the situation). For example:

- 'That option isn't possible.'*
- 'That's not acceptable.'*
- 'You need to do something else.'*

Learners practise:

- adapting their responses
- suggesting alternatives
- continuing the interaction

6. Managing and resolving the interaction

Set a clear outcome for the task (for example, agree a solution). Learners must:

- explain the problem
- respond to the other speaker
- suggest and agree on a solution.

Task 4: Discussion

Learners take part in a short discussion with another candidate. They are given a topic by the examiner and asked to discuss it together. The discussion is informal and collaborative, with both candidates working together rather than competing.

At Level 1, the discussion typically involves evaluating options, comparing ideas and working together to plan or agree on a solution in an informal interaction related to social, work or study contexts. Learners are expected to express and support their opinions, respond to different viewpoints and work collaboratively towards an outcome.

The task lasts up to four minutes and requires learners to develop ideas, respond flexibly and maintain interaction with increasing independence.

Key skills:

- Make relevant and developed contributions to a shared discussion
- Express and support opinions with reasons and examples
- Respond to and build on others' ideas
- Compare options and evaluate alternatives
- Help move the discussion towards a decision

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can take part in informal discussion, express and develop ideas, and interact with others to reach a shared outcome.

1.1 Interactive listening

Learners must listen carefully and respond appropriately to what others say, particularly when ideas differ or the discussion develops. This includes:

- understanding main points and relevant detail
- responding directly to others' ideas
- asking for clarification or more information
- adapting responses as the discussion develops.

3.2 Cohesion

Learners need to connect and organise their ideas clearly so that their contributions are easy to follow throughout the discussion. At Level 1, learners are expected to develop ideas across longer turns and respond logically to others. This includes:

- linking ideas clearly using a range of connecting words and phrases
- organising information or opinions in a logical sequence
- developing contributions across more than one sentence or turn
- showing clear connections between opinions, reasons and examples
- responding cohesively to the ideas raised during the discussion.

4.1 Participation

Learners need to take an active and consistent role in the discussion. This includes:

- ▶ contributing more than once and across the discussion
- ▶ responding to others rather than speaking in isolation
- ▶ helping to maintain and develop the discussion.

4.2 Expressing opinions

Learners are expected to express clear opinions and support them. This includes:

- ▶ stating opinions clearly (for example, *'I think...'*, *'In my opinion...'*)
- ▶ giving reasons and, where possible, examples
- ▶ comparing ideas or options.

4.3 Engaging with others

Learners need to interact actively and help shape the direction of the discussion. This includes:

- ▶ asking questions (for example, *'What do you think?'*, *'Why?'*)
- ▶ agreeing or disagreeing politely
- ▶ building on others' ideas or suggesting alternatives
- ▶ working towards a shared decision or outcome.

Sample discussion prompt

Discussion prompt

You both have a lot of homework to do. Talk about the best ways to balance your studies and home life. Agree on what you will need to do to achieve this.

Classroom suggestions

1. Discussion tasks with evaluation and choice

Give learners tasks where they must:

- ▶ compare options
- ▶ discuss advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ make a decision together.

For example:

- ▶ choose the best place for an event
- ▶ decide how to spend a budget
- ▶ compare different activities or options

2. Developing opinions with support

- ▶ give an opinion
- ▶ add a reason
- ▶ give an example.

3. Comparing and evaluating ideas

Give learners two or more options and ask them to:

- ▶ compare them
- ▶ discuss pros and cons
- ▶ explain their preferences.

This builds more developed discussion skills.

4. Managing interaction and turn-taking

Practise phrases that help learners manage discussion. Encourage learners to involve their partner and respond to their ideas using phrases such as:

- ▶ *'What do you think?'*
- ▶ *'I agree because...'*
- ▶ *'I'm not sure about that...'*
- ▶ *'Maybe we could...'*

5. Working towards agreement and adjusting ideas where needed

Set tasks where learners must agree on a final decision. Learners practise:

- ▶ suggesting ideas
- ▶ responding to alternatives
- ▶ changing or adapting their views
- ▶ agreeing on a final outcome.

6. Responding to different opinions

Give learners tasks where there is no obvious answer. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ agree or disagree politely
- ▶ explain why
- ▶ suggest alternatives.

Provide phrases such as:

- ▶ *'That's a good idea, but...'*
- ▶ *'I see your point, but...'*
- ▶ *'What about...?'*

Level 1 Independent Listening

At Level 1, Independent Listening (Task 3) includes two extracts:

- ▶ Extract 1 – a monologue (one speaker)
- ▶ Extract 2 – a dialogue (two speakers).

The monologue includes a wider range of spoken texts, such as informational or instructional audio, short presentations and extended explanations. These extracts may include more detailed or less familiar information, requiring learners to identify both main ideas and supporting detail.

The dialogue involves two speakers discussing the same topic, often with different experiences, viewpoints or opinions. Learners need to follow how ideas develop across the conversation and understand how speakers respond to each other.

At this level, the two extracts are linked by a common theme. The dialogue often develops, extends or complicates ideas introduced in the monologue by presenting another perspective, experience or situation. The listening questions also become more varied and interpretative, requiring learners to understand viewpoint, implied meaning and supporting detail.

Each extract is approximately 100-130 words and is played twice. The texts are slightly less familiar than at Entry 3 but still relate to real-life situations learners may encounter in everyday life, work or study.

Learners answer eight questions in total. They are given the four questions per extract before they listen, allowing them to focus on key information and listen with a clear purpose. The questions follow a consistent pattern and assess a range of listening skills, including:

- ▶ understanding the main idea and purpose (gist)
- ▶ identifying key and supporting details
- ▶ recognising and evaluating opinions
- ▶ understanding implied meaning (inference).

At Level 1, learners are expected to listen more selectively and interpret meaning with greater independence, rather than relying only on clearly stated information.

Learners will receive full (2/2) or partial marks (1/2) depending on the completeness of the response. Two marks are awarded when the answer is correct, sufficiently precise and fully developed. Only one mark will be awarded where the answer is correct but lacks detail, explanation or precision.

Understanding monologues and dialogues across levels

In the ESOL Skills for Life Independent Listening tasks, learners listen to both monologues (one speaker) and dialogues (two speakers). These require slightly different listening skills, which develop across the levels.

Text type	What learners must do	Features of Level 1 texts
Monologues (one speaker)	- follow a single speaker's ideas - understand information presented in sequence - identify key points and supporting details - recognise opinions or attitudes	- more developed explanations and connected ideas - less familiar but realistic topics - include purpose, viewpoint or simple evaluation - identify main ideas and relevant supporting detail
Dialogues (two speakers)	- follow a conversation between speakers - identify who is speaking and what they mean - understand how speakers respond to and develop ideas - recognise agreement, disagreement and implied meaning	- longer contributions from each speaker - include recounting, explanation or problem-solving - ideas develop across turns, not just short exchanges - interpret implied meaning, attitude or outcome

Teaching listening at Level 1

At Level 1, listening continues to be an active process, but learners are expected to engage with spoken texts more independently and with greater control.

Learners do not need to understand every word, but they do need to:

- identify relevant information
- recognise how ideas are developed
- interpret meaning, including opinions and implied messages.

Listening lessons should continue to move beyond simply playing a recording and checking answers. Effective teaching at this level involves:

- preparing learners before listening (for example, predicting topic, context or possible content)
- setting a clear purpose for each listen (for example, gist, detail, opinion, inference)
- encouraging selective listening for relevant information
- using more than one listen with different focuses
- helping learners explain how they arrived at their answers.

At Level 1, learners also need support in developing greater control and independence. They may still feel unsure when meaning is not stated directly or when they do not understand everything they hear.

Teachers can support this by encouraging learners to:

- focus on key information rather than every word
- listen for meaning across a longer stretch of speech
- use context, tone and key phrases to interpret meaning
- continue listening even when some information is unclear.

At this level, learners benefit from tasks that require them to compare information across texts or speakers, identify opinions and attitudes, and interpret meaning that is not directly stated. By developing these strategies, learners become more confident and independent listeners, able to cope with longer, more detailed and less predictable spoken language in real-life situations.

Linking listening and speaking

Listening and speaking should be taught together wherever possible. In the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum, these skills are closely linked and assessed together, reflecting the way people communicate in real life situations. In real-life communication, learners need to understand spoken input, interpret meaning and respond appropriately, often while the interaction is still developing. Listening activities can therefore support the development of speaking, interaction and discussion skills.

At Level 1, learners benefit from analysing how speakers:

- explain ideas and experiences
- manage problems or difficult situations
- give opinions and support them with reasons
- respond flexibly to what another speaker says.

Teachers can use listening texts to help learners notice:

- turn-taking and interaction patterns
- useful functional language (for example, apologising, suggesting, clarifying)
- how speakers develop ideas across several turns
- how tone and word choice affect meaning.

After listening, learners can:

- role-play a similar situation
- continue or extend the conversation
- respond to a new problem or change
- discuss how they would handle the situation themselves.

This helps learners develop both comprehension and interaction skills while building confidence in responding appropriately and maintaining communication in less predictable situations.

How listening strategies develop across levels

Across the ESOL Skills for Life Speaking and Listening exams, learners are not simply expected to understand more difficult spoken texts. They are expected to listen in different ways, using different strategies for different purposes, and to combine these strategies as tasks become longer, more detailed and less predictable. They will hear both monologues and dialogues at all levels.

At Entry 1, independent listening focuses mainly on understanding very simple, clearly stated information:

- recognising familiar words, names and everyday expressions
- understanding very short instructions and simple spoken messages
- listening for single key details such as time, place or number
- relying heavily on repetition, slow speech and familiar contextual or visual support.

At Entry 2, learners begin to listen more selectively and follow slightly longer spoken texts on familiar topics:

- understanding the main topic or situation
- identifying key details in short explanations or conversations
- understanding simple opinions, feelings and preferences
- beginning to connect more than one piece of information across a text or conversation.

By Entry 3, learners begin to take more control of their listening:

- following longer spoken texts on familiar topics
- identifying main ideas and key details
- understanding more than one piece of information and how ideas are connected
- beginning to interpret meaning that is not always stated directly.

At Level 1, listening becomes more selective and interpretative:

- understanding explanations, viewpoints and purpose
- identifying both main ideas and relevant supporting detail
- recognising implied meaning, attitude and intention
- interpreting opinions and responding appropriately in a range of situations.

At Level 2, listening is integrated, interpretative and evaluative:

- interpreting complex, less predictable spoken language across extended texts
- evaluating ideas, opinions, arguments and supporting evidence
- recognising tone, attitude, viewpoint and possible bias
- combining listening strategies flexibly to interpret extended spoken interaction and discussion.

This progression means that teaching needs to move from supported understanding of simple, clearly stated information towards independent, flexible listening, where learners can interpret meaning, follow connected ideas and respond appropriately in typical situations outside the classroom involving a single speaker or two speakers, even when they encounter changes, problems or unexpected information.

Progression of independent listening strategies: Entry 1 to Level 2

Subskill	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
Gist	Recognise the general topic (for example, the place, the person, the purpose)	Identify the main idea of a short text	Understand the main idea of longer spoken texts, including simple explanations	Identify main ideas and purpose in longer spoken texts	Interpret overall meaning, including tone and purpose
Response	Respond to very simple questions (often one-word answers)	Respond to simple questions using key information	–	–	–
Detail	Identify single, clear facts (for example, a time, a place, a number)	Identify key information in short spoken texts	Identify relevant details within longer spoken texts	Select relevant detail to support understanding	Select precise detail within complex or less predictable texts
Complex detail	–	Begin to identify more than one piece of information	Understand linked details, sequences or conditions	Follow more complex explanations and relationships between ideas	Interpret detailed and layered information across extended texts
Inference	–	–	Begin to understand implied meaning (for example, feelings, simple intentions)	Identify implied meaning and attitude more consistently	Interpret nuanced or less explicit meaning
Evaluation	–	–	Recognise simple opinions or attitudes	Understand viewpoint, purpose and bias	Evaluate ideas, arguments and speaker stance

Classroom resources – Level 1 Independent Listening

Authentic resources for classroom activities

Use authentic audio sources that reflect the types of listening learners will do outside the classroom. At Level 1, these should still be accessible but may be longer, less familiar and include more developed ideas or viewpoints.

Teachers can:

- use existing recordings (for example, announcements, videos, short talks)
- adapt or select sections of longer audio
- record their own dialogues or monologues to focus on specific skills.

Examples of authentic audio sources

- Public announcements and information
 - transport updates, delays, service changes
- Service and workplace communication
 - phone messages, customer enquiries, workplace instructions
- Local and community information
 - event information, short talks, guided explanations
- Everyday interactions
 - conversations involving planning, problems or experiences
- Explanatory or informational audio
 - describing places, giving advice, explaining a situation

Types of listening tasks teachers can create

- Developed dialogues
 - discussing plans, solving problems, sharing experiences
- Structured monologues
 - explaining a topic, giving information, describing a situation
- Selective listening tasks
 - identifying key information and supporting detail
- Paired or group listening tasks
 - listening and sharing or comparing information

Web resources

At Level 1, video and audio clips can be used to introduce more developed content, including opinions and viewpoints. These resources can support both listening and speaking development and are most effective when learners actively respond to what they hear.

At Level 1, these should be:

- ▶ slightly longer (for example, 1-2 minutes)
- ▶ clearly structured but with more detail
- ▶ based on realistic situations or topics.

Examples

- ▶ short videos explaining a topic or place
- ▶ clips where speakers give opinions or describe experiences
- ▶ short interviews or discussions

How to use them

- ▶ pause and ask prediction and opinion questions
- ▶ use staged listening (gist → detail → interpretation)
- ▶ focus on identifying key information and supporting detail
- ▶ ask learners to identify opinions, viewpoints or implied meaning
- ▶ ask learners what information helped them understand the speaker's message
- ▶ use clips to introduce comparison, discussion or follow-up speaking tasks

Classroom-ready resources

(levels indicate the relevant section of the website for Level 1)

- ▶ BBC Bitesize – short videos and listening tasks with more developed content
- ▶ Skillsworkshop ESOL (Level 1) – structured listening tasks with a clear skills focus
- ▶ ELLLO (B2) – monologues and dialogues with more developed ideas and transcripts
- ▶ BBC Learning English (medium) – short clips with clear development of ideas and viewpoints
- ▶ ESL Lounge (intermediate) – listening tasks with more detailed comprehension
- ▶ Listen A Minute – useful for developing gist and detail, can be extended for discussion
- ▶ Talk English (intermediate) – dialogues for practising more developed interaction
- ▶ Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (intermediate) – graded listening with a focus on comprehension and detail
- ▶ Luke's English Podcast (selected short clips) – use short sections focusing on gist, detail and opinion
- ▶ ESOL Courses (intermediate) – structured listening tasks with interactive elements

How to adapt authentic resources at Level 1

At Level 1, learners need less simplification and more opportunities to develop independent listening strategies.

Select, rather than heavily simplify	Use authentic audio but choose sections that are clear and manageable
Pre-teach key language selectively	Focus on key vocabulary, useful phrases, topic-specific language
Provide a clear listening purpose	For example, <i>'What is the speaker's main point?', 'What problem are they describing?', 'What is their opinion?'</i>
Use staged listening tasks	First listen for gist, then for detail, then for inference or evaluation
Encourage selective listening	Focus on relevant information and ignore less important detail

Tips for teachers

Train learners to listen selectively for meaning, detail and viewpoint rather than trying to understand every word.

Glossary of listening subskills

Gist

Definition

Listening for gist means understanding the main idea, overall meaning and purpose of what is being said, without focusing on every word. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What is this mainly about?
- ▶ What is the speaker trying to do?
- ▶ What is the overall message or purpose?

What it looks like in Level 1 Independent Listening

At Level 1, learners need to understand the main idea of longer and more developed spoken texts, including identifying:

- ▶ the main topic of a monologue or conversation
- ▶ the purpose of the message (for example, to explain, to describe, to recommend)
- ▶ the situation or context
- ▶ the general focus of a discussion or interaction.

Learners may need to listen across a longer stretch of speech, identify key ideas rather than individual words and recognise how the topic develops.

Examples from the Level 1 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'What is the purpose of this announcement?'* (listen for key ideas that show why the speaker is giving the information, not just what it is about).
2. (Dialogue) *'What are the man and woman talking about?'* (listen for the overall topic by combining key information from both speakers).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a slightly longer recording (1-2 minutes). Before listening, ask learners to predict the topic or context. Learners listen once and write a short summary (5-8 words). Play again and allow learners to refine their answers. Review as a class and ask learners which key words or ideas helped them identify the main message.
2. Prepare several recordings and a list of possible topics and purposes (for example, giving advice, describing an experience, explaining a problem). Before listening, check learners understand the possible purposes. Learners listen and match each recording to both a topic and a purpose. After checking, ask learners to justify their answers using what they heard.
3. Play a recording (monologue or dialogue) and give learners three possible summaries. Ask learners to underline key words in each option before listening. Learners choose the best answer, then listen again to confirm. For dialogues, remind learners they need to listen to both speakers to understand the overall topic. Discuss why the other options are less accurate, focusing on main ideas rather than detail.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Trying to understand every word instead of focusing on key ideas
- ▶ Focusing too much on detail and missing the overall message
- ▶ Difficulty identifying the purpose of the text
- ▶ Losing track of the main idea in longer recordings

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding the purpose of a short talk, explanation or announcement
- ▶ Recognising what a conversation is about in a workplace or service setting
- ▶ Understanding the topic of a discussion or interview
- ▶ Identifying the purpose of information (for example, advice, explanation, recommendation)

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to understand the main idea and purpose of spoken English quickly, even when the message is longer or more detailed. Listening for gist helps learners follow explanations, understand conversations and identify what is important in real-life situations such as work, study and accessing services.

Detail

Definition

Listening for detail means identifying specific, clearly stated information in what is being said. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What information is given?
- ▶ What does the speaker say about this?
- ▶ What is the key detail I need?

What it looks like in Level 1 Independent Listening

At Level 1, learners need to identify specific information within longer and more developed spoken texts. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ key facts (for example, numbers, places, quantities, descriptions)
- ▶ clearly stated information within a longer explanation
- ▶ relevant details within a wider context.

At this level the answer is still stated directly, but learners must listen more selectively and distinguish the correct detail from other information in the text.

Examples from the Level 1 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'How many stars can you see from most parts of the UK?'* (listen for a specific number and ignore other numerical information in the text).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Give learners a question before listening (for example, *'How many...?'*, *'Where...?'*). Ask them to underline the key words in the question. Play a recording and ask learners to listen only for the relevant detail. Play again and allow learners to check their answers. After listening, ask learners what word or phrase helped them identify the correct answer.

2. Play a recording that includes several similar details (for example, different numbers, places or times). Give learners 2-3 possible answers. Learners choose the correct answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the other options are incorrect, focusing on how learners can avoid confusion between similar details.
3. Play a longer recording and ask one or two specific detail questions. Remind learners that they do not need to understand everything. They should listen for the relevant part of the text. After listening, ask learners to explain where in the recording they heard the answer and what helped them identify it.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Trying to understand the whole text instead of focusing on the question
- ▶ Missing the correct detail because of surrounding information
- ▶ Confusing similar details (for example, numbers or quantities)
- ▶ Difficulty identifying which part of the text contains the answer

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding key details in announcements or instructions
- ▶ Identifying important information in a workplace explanation
- ▶ Listening for specific information in a service interaction
- ▶ Understanding factual details in short talks or presentations

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to listen for specific information within longer spoken messages. Listening for detail helps learners identify what is important, follow instructions accurately and respond appropriately in situations such as work, travel and accessing services.

Complex detail

Definition

Listening for complex detail means understanding more than one piece of information and how ideas are connected in what is being said. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What information is linked together?
- ▶ Why did something happen?
- ▶ What explains this situation?

What it looks like in Level 1 Independent Listening

At Level 1, listening for complex detail focuses on dialogues, where learners need to understand how ideas develop across speakers. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ reasons or explanations given in a conversation
- ▶ supporting information linked to a main idea
- ▶ connections between different parts of the dialogue
- ▶ how one speaker's idea is explained or developed by the other.

At this level, learners need to:

- listen across more than one turn
- connect information from different speakers
- identify relevant supporting detail within a longer exchange.

Examples from the Level 1 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Dialogue) *'Why didn't the woman do lots of walking?'* (listen for the reason given and connect it to earlier information in the conversation).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a dialogue and give learners a 'why' question before listening. Ask learners to listen for the reason and underline key words in the question. Play the recording and ask learners to identify the part of the conversation where the answer is given. After listening, ask learners which speaker gave the key information and how it connects to the question.
2. Play a dialogue and ask learners to identify what one speaker says and how the other speaker responds or adds information. Learners explain how the ideas are connected (for example, problem → explanation → result).
3. Play a dialogue and give learners 2-3 possible explanations for a situation. Learners choose the correct answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the other options are incorrect, focusing on how the correct answer depends on understanding more than one part of the conversation.

Common learner difficulties

- Focusing on one part of the conversation and missing the full explanation
- Difficulty linking ideas across different speakers
- Missing key words that signal reasons (for example, because, so, but)
- Confusion between main ideas and supporting detail

UK life examples

- Understanding reasons for changes or problems (for example, delays, cancellations)
- Following explanations in conversations at work or in services
- Understanding why decisions are made in discussions
- Linking information across a conversation

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to understand not just what is said but why it is said. Listening for complex detail helps learners follow explanations, understand reasons and respond appropriately in conversations where information is developed across speakers.

Evaluation

Definition

Listening for evaluation means understanding and judging how useful, appropriate or relevant information is based on what the speaker says. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What advice or information is being given?
- ▶ How useful is this information?
- ▶ What can we do with this information?

What it looks like in Level 1 Independent Listening

At Level 1, learners need to understand and apply information from spoken texts, including both monologues and dialogues.

Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ useful advice or recommendations
- ▶ what information can be applied in a situation
- ▶ why something is helpful or important
- ▶ how information supports a decision or action.

Evaluation at Level 1 is still supported, but learners are expected to interpret information independently and explain why something is useful or appropriate

Examples from the Level 1 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'Where should dark sky parks be located?'* (listen for advice or information about suitable locations and identify what is recommended).
2. (Dialogue) *'Why was the woman's guidebook useful?'* (listen for what the guidebook suggested and explain why it helped in the situation).

Classroom/practice suggestion

1. Play a recording where the speaker gives advice or recommendations. Before listening, ask learners to identify what kind of information they are listening for (for example, advice, suggestions). Learners listen and identify what the speaker recommends. After listening, ask learners to explain why the advice is useful.
2. Play a recording and give learners a simple situation (for example, planning a visit, solving a problem). Learners listen and decide which information is useful for that situation. After listening, learners explain their choices using what they heard.
3. Play a recording and give learners 2-3 possible answers or actions. Learners choose the best option, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the correct answer is more appropriate, focusing on how the information supports the decision.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Confusing factual information with advice or recommendation
- ▶ Identifying information but not understanding its usefulness
- ▶ Difficulty explaining why something is helpful
- ▶ Relying on general knowledge instead of what is heard

UK life examples

- ▶ Deciding where to go or what to do based on advice
- ▶ Understanding useful information in travel, work or services
- ▶ Recognising recommendations in conversations or explanations
- ▶ Using spoken information to make simple decisions

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners need to understand and use information from spoken English to make decisions. Listening for evaluation helps learners recognise useful advice, apply information to real situations and respond appropriately in contexts such as work, services and everyday communication.

Inference

Definition

Listening for inference means understanding meaning that is not stated directly but can be understood from what the speaker says. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What does the speaker mean?
- ▶ Why is this happening?
- ▶ What can we understand from this information?

What it looks like in Level 1 Interactive Listening

At Level 1, learners need to interpret implied meaning within longer and more developed spoken texts, including both monologues and dialogues. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ reasons or explanations that are not stated directly
- ▶ outcomes based on the information given
- ▶ meaning that is suggested through context
- ▶ how different pieces of information lead to a conclusion.

At this level, learners need to use context to interpret meaning and go beyond individual words to understand the overall message.

Examples from the Level 1 Interactive Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'Why is the far north particularly exciting?'* (listen for information about what can be seen and use this to understand the reason).
2. (Dialogue) *'Why was it fortunate that the woman saw lots of stars?'* (listen for what happened before and after, and use this to understand why it was fortunate).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a recording and ask a *'why'* question. Before listening, ask learners to underline key words in the question. Learners listen and identify the relevant information. Play again and ask learners to explain how different parts of the recording connect to form the answer.
2. Play a recording and ask learners what we can understand from the situation (for example, *'Why is this good?'*, *'Why is this a problem?'*). Provide 2-3 options if needed. After listening, ask learners to explain which clues helped them decide.

3. Play a recording and give learners three possible explanations. Learners choose the best answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the other options are incorrect, focusing on how the correct answer depends on combining information from the text.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Expecting the answer to be stated directly
- ▶ Focusing on individual words instead of overall meaning
- ▶ Difficulty linking information to form a conclusion
- ▶ Uncertainty when more than one answer seems possible

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding why something has happened (for example, delays, changes)
- ▶ Interpreting meaning in explanations or descriptions
- ▶ Recognising implied meaning in conversations
- ▶ Understanding situations where information is not stated directly

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday communication, meaning is often implied rather than stated directly. Learners need to understand reasons, outcomes and implied meaning in order to respond appropriately and take part in real-life situations such as work, services and social interaction.

General teaching strategies for Level 1 independent listening

Train learners to match the question type to a listening strategy

At Level 1, learners need to apply different listening strategies more independently and select what information is relevant.

- ▶ Gist → listen for main ideas and purpose; identify what the speaker is trying to do
- ▶ Detail → listen selectively for specific information; ignore less relevant detail
- ▶ Complex detail → listen across speakers; connect ideas and identify reasons or explanations
- ▶ Evaluation → identify useful information, advice or recommendations and how they can be applied
- ▶ Inference → use context and key information to understand meaning that is not directly stated

Train learners to listen selectively

At Level 1, learners need to move beyond listening for key words and begin selecting relevant information. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ focus on what the question is asking before listening
- ▶ ignore information that is not relevant to the task
- ▶ listen for meaning across a longer stretch of speech
- ▶ continue listening even if some parts are unclear.

Build listening in stages

Use a structured listening routine, but increase independence:

- Before listening → predict topic, context and possible content
- First listening → identify gist and overall purpose
- Second listening → focus on relevant detail or key information
- Third listening (if needed) → check answers and confirm meaning

At Level 1, learners should begin to decide what to listen for based on the question and adjust their listening focus between listens.

Encourage justification and explanation

At this level, learners should be able to explain how they found their answers. Use prompts such as *'What did you hear that helped you?'* or *'Why is that the correct answer?'*. Encourage learners to:

- refer to specific words or phrases
- explain how information connects
- avoid guessing without evidence.

Develop listening for meaning, not just words

Learners may still try to understand everything they hear. Encourage learners to:

- focus on overall meaning rather than individual words
- use context, tone and key ideas to support understanding
- recognise that not all information is equally important.

Build UK context familiarity

Use realistic listening situations that reflect more developed communication:

- explanations or short talks (for example, describing places, giving information)
- conversations involving planning, problems or experiences
- workplace or service interactions with more detail
- discussions where opinions or viewpoints are expressed.

Link listening and speaking practice

At Level 1, learners should begin to use listening activities to improve how they participate in spoken interaction, not just how they answer comprehension questions.

Encourage learners to:

- notice how speakers explain ideas, give reasons and respond to problems
- identify useful phrases for managing interaction (for example, apologising, suggesting, clarifying)
- listen for how speakers take turns and build on each other's ideas
- reuse useful language from recordings in role-plays and discussions.

After listening activities, give learners opportunities to:

- ▶ continue the conversation
- ▶ role-play a similar interaction
- ▶ respond to a new situation or problem
- ▶ discuss what they would do and why.

This helps learners develop listening, speaking and interaction skills together in realistic communication tasks.

Level 1 Independent Listening – Practice Set

Task 3: Extract 1 – Monologue

Materials

- ▶ Extract 1 – Monologue: 'Northern Lights'
- ▶ Appendices A-B

Time guide: 40-50 minutes (activities)

Assessment categories in Monologue: gist • detail • evaluation • inference

Activity 3.1: Before you listen (prediction)

Aim: Prepare learners to anticipate topic, context and content

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Introduce the topic

Using **Appendix A: Monologue**, ask learners why people might visit Scotland.

Elicit:

- countryside
- cities
- culture
- holidays

Step 2: Focus on the sky

Ask learners what they can see in the night sky.

Elicit:

- stars
- moon
- lights

Step 3: Predict the content

Ask learners why people might visit a place to look at the sky. Elicit ideas such as:

- many stars
- special lights
- good views

Step 4: Set the context

Explain that learners will hear an announcement about visiting Scotland and something special you can see there.

Activity 3.2: Gist (Question 1)

Aim: Identify purpose of a monologue

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: First listening

Play the recording once. Ask learners what the purpose of the announcement is.

Monologue

People visit Scotland for many reasons: for its beautiful countryside, historical cities and distinctive culture.

In recent years, a different attraction has brought visitors: the skies. In most areas of the UK, you can see up to 100 stars in the night sky, but in the areas with the darkest skies this multiplies to over 1,000. Recognising the value of such places, the UK government has set aside some as 'Dark Sky Parks'.

The majority are dotted around the more rural areas of Scotland, from the isolated forests of the southwest, to the remote islands and highlands of the north. Dark Sky Parks now draw tourists dedicated to stargazing and astrophotography. In the far north, visitors can periodically witness the Northern Lights, a dance of colourful patterns across the skies.

Learners discuss their answers in pairs. Refer to **Appendix B: Monologue / Model answers and transcript** for answers to questions.

Step 2: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- to explain a reason to visit Scotland
- to explain why people are visiting Scotland
- it is to help tourists who come to Scotland

Acceptable partial answer(s):

- to bring tourists to Scotland

Step 3: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- visit Scotland
- attraction
- tourists

Explain that for gist at Level 1, learners should listen for overall purpose and think about what the speaker is trying to do.

Activity 3.3: Detail (Question 2)

Aim: Identify specific information within a longer text

Time: 6–8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: *'How many stars can you see from most parts of the UK?'*

Ask learners to underline the key words:

- how many
- stars

Step 2: Second listening

Play the recording again. Learners write their answers.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- about/up to 100

Accept partial answer(s):

- 100

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- 100
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for detail, learners should listen for specific information and ignore other numbers or details.

Activity 3.4: Evaluation (Question 3)

Aim: Identify useful information and apply it

Time: 6–8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: *'Where should Dark Sky Parks be located?'*

Ask learners what kind of places are good for seeing stars and if they have been in very dark places.

Step 2: Third listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- location
- useful information.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- somewhere remote
- somewhere isolated
- away from cities

Accept partial answer(s):

- in forests, highlands and islands

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- rural
- isolated
- remote
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for evaluation, learners need to listen for the information that answers the question fully and select the most useful ideas from the text, not focus too much on one specific detail.

Activity 3.5: Inference (Question 4)

Aim: Understand implied meaning

Time: 7-9 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'Why is the far north particularly exciting?'

Ask learners if the answer is stated directly. Explain that this is an inference question so they will need to think about what can be inferred by the words in the text.

Step 2: Final listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- what you can see
- why it is special.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- because you can see the Northern Lights

Accept partial answer(s):

- you can see patterns in the sky

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- Northern Lights
- colourful patterns
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that learners need to listen for key information in the text that connects to the question. The question is not said directly, but the information needed to answer it is.

Activity 3.6: Full and partial answers

Aim: Help learners understand how to improve answers for full marks

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Present model answers

Write on the board:

- 100
- up to 100

Ask learners which answer is better. Explain that full answers are more precise and match the information exactly.

Step 2: Improve answers

Give learners a partial answer: 'forests'. Ask how they can improve it.

Expected:

- in remote areas such as forests

Remind learners that at Level 1, they need to give more than one piece of information to get full marks.

Step 3: Practice

Give learners short answers:

- 100
- islands

Learners work in pairs to improve them.

Step 4: Key message

Explain that at Level 1, answers need to be accurate and clear and more detail often improves the answer.

Activity 3.7: Real-life extension (discussion)

Aim: Apply listening to real-life situations

Time: 8-10 minutes

Interaction: pairs → small groups

Step 1: Link to the listening

Ask learners:

- Why do people visit Dark Sky Parks?

Step 2: Give a similar situation

Tell learners they want to visit a place to see something special (for example, stars, nature, views).

Ask where they would like to go.

Step 3: Pair discussion

Learners discuss their answers in pairs. Encourage:

- giving reasons
- explaining choices.

Provide prompts such as:

- I would go to...
- It is good because...

Step 4: Add variation

Add a condition:

- the place is very far
- the weather is not good

Learners discuss again.

Step 5: Feedback and reflection

Elicit ideas from the class. Highlight:

- reasons
- decision-making.

Explain that in real life, learners need to understand information, decide what is useful and explain their choices.

Task 3: Extract 2 – Dialogue

Materials

- ▶ Extract 2 – Dialogue: 'Northern Lights'
- ▶ Appendices C-D

Time guide: 45-55 minutes (activities)

Assessment categories in Dialogue: gist • complex detail • evaluation • inference

Activity 3.8: Before you listen (prediction)

Aim: Prepare learners to anticipate topic, context and possible issues

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Introduce the situation

Using **Appendix C: Dialogue**, ask learners:

- Have you ever been on a trip or holiday?
- What do people usually talk about after a trip?

Elicit ideas such as:

- places
- activities
- weather
- problems

Step 2: Predict the content

Ask learners what topics might come up in a conversation about a trip. Elicit examples such as:

- walking or sightseeing
- weather
- plans or activities

Step 3: Predict possible problems

Ask learners what problems can happen on a trip.

Elicit:

- bad weather
- no time
- transport issues

Step 4: Set the context

Explain that learners will hear a conversation about a trip and what happened during it, including some problems and changes.

Activity 3.9: Gist (Question 5)

Aim: Identify the main topic of a conversation

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: First listening

Play the recording once. Ask learners what the man and woman are talking about.

Dialogue

Man: Hi Julie. How was your trip up to Scotland?

Woman: It was fantastic. The views of the snow-capped mountains were breathtaking.

Man: So, did you do a bit of hiking? Isn't it rather dark at this time of year?

Woman: Yes. We didn't have time for any ambitious treks. The sun sets at 4, you know. But that also has its advantages.

Man: Oh yes, I remember you said you planned to do some stargazing. How did that go?

Woman: Well, according to the guidebook, you should be away from city lights, so we drove to a 'dark sky' area in the mountains. When we arrived, it was rather overcast. But after a while it cleared up, and we got a great view. There were thousands of stars. It was unforgettable.

Man: Wow, that was fortunate.

Learners discuss their answers in pairs. Refer to *Appendix D: Dialogue / Model answers and transcript* for answers to questions.

Step 2: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- the woman's trip to Scotland

Accept partial answer(s):

- Scotland
- a trip

Step 3: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- trip
- Scotland
- mountains
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for gist in a dialogue, learners should:

- listen to both speakers
- identify the shared topic.

Activity 3.10: Complex detail (Question 6)

Aim: Understand reasons by linking ideas across speakers

Time: 6-8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: *'Why didn't the woman do lots of walking?'*

Ask learners to underline the key words:

- why
- walking

Ask learners if they are listening for one idea or more.

Step 2: Second listening

Play the recording again. Learners write their answers.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- because there was not enough daylight
- it was too dark
- it gets dark at 4

Accept partial answer(s):

- she didn't have time

Step 4: Build exam awareness

Ask learners which answer is better and why. Explain that a full answer includes the reason clearly linked to the situation.

Step 5: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- the sun sets at 4
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that learners need to:

- listen across the conversation
- connect ideas to understand reasons.

Activity 3.11: Evaluation (Question 7)

Aim: Identify useful information and explain its value

Time: 6-8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'Why was the woman's guidebook useful?'

Ask learners:

- What information does a guidebook give?

Step 2: Third listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- advice
- useful information.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- it gave her good advice about places to stargaze/where to see stars

Accept partial answer(s):

- it told her about stargazing

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them.

Elicit:

- guidebook
- dark sky area
- away from city lights
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for evaluation, learners need to identify useful information and explain why it helps.

Activity 3.12: Inference (Question 8)

Aim: Understand implied meaning using context

Time: 7-9 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'Why was it fortunate that the woman saw lots of stars?'

Ask learners if the answer is stated directly. Explain that this is an inference question.

Step 2: Final listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- what happened before
- what changed.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- because the weather changed
- it had been overcast/cloudy

Accept partial answer(s):

- because of the weather

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what they heard.

Elicit:

- overcast
- cleared up
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that learners need to:

- connect events
- understand cause and result.

Activity 3.13: Full and partial answers (exam awareness)

Aim: Help learners understand how to improve answers for full marks

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Present model answers

Write on the board:

- because of the weather
- because it was cloudy at first but then it cleared

Ask learners which answer gets full marks.

Step 2: Focus on why

Elicit correct answer(s):

- the second answer explains clearly

Explain that full answers include both the key idea plus the explanation.

Step 3: Improve answers

Give learners the phrase 'she didn't have time'. Ask learners to improve it.

Elicit:

- she didn't have time because it gets dark early

Step 4: Practice

Give learners short answers:

- it is too expensive
- they had no time

Learners improve them in pairs.

Step 5: Key message

Explain that at Level 1, answers often need an explanation or connection, not just a short phrase.

Activity 3.14: Real-life extension (discussion)

Aim: Apply listening to real-life communication and problem-solving

Time: 8-10 minutes

Interaction: pairs → small groups

Step 1: Link to the listening

Ask learners:

- What problems did the woman have?
- What helped her?

Step 2: Give a similar situation

Tell learners they are on a trip, but:

- the weather is bad
- your plans change.

Ask what they would do in that situation.

Step 3: Pair discussion

Learners discuss their answers in pairs. Encourage them to:

- suggest ideas
- give reasons
- respond to each other.

Provide prompts such as:

- We can...
- Maybe we should...
- That's a good idea, but...

Step 4: Add variation (flexibility)

Add a change:

- the weather improves
- you find new information

Learners discuss again.

Step 5: Feedback and reflection

Elicit ideas from the class. Highlight:

- different solutions
- use of reasons
- interaction.

Explain that in real life, learners need to understand situations, respond to changes and make decisions with others.

Appendix A: Monologue | Activities 3.1–3.7

1. Discuss these questions with a partner

- Why do people visit Scotland?
- What can people see in the night sky?
- Why might someone visit a dark or remote place?

What is the recording about?

2. First listening – Gist

What is the purpose of this announcement?

Listen for key words that show the purpose of the message and what the speaker is trying to do.

3. Second listening – Detail

How many stars can you see from most parts of the UK?

Listen for specific information such as numbers or quantities.

4. Third listening – Evaluation

Where should Dark Sky Parks be located?

Listen for useful information about where something should be and why.

5. Final listening – Inference

Why is the far north particularly exciting?

Listen for important information, then use it to explain why it is special.

6. Improve your answers

Make these answers better by adding more detail or a clearer explanation.

100 → _____

forests → _____

7. Real-life link

Have you ever visited a place because of something special (for example, views, nature, events)? Where did you go? Why did you choose it?

Appendix B: Monologue | Model answers and transcript

Remind learners that full answers for the monologue questions:

- are precise and complete (not just single words)
- explain or develop the answer
- combine ideas where needed (for example, reason + situation or detail + explanation).

Question	Partial answer	Full answer
What is the purpose of this announcement?	to bring tourists to Scotland	to explain a reason to visit Scotland/to explain why people are visiting Scotland/it is to help tourists who come to Scotland
How many stars can you see from most parts of the UK?	100	about/up to 100
Where should Dark Sky Parks be located?	in forests, highlands and islands	somewhere remote/isolated/away from cities
Why is the far north particularly exciting?	you can see patterns in the sky	because you can see the Northern Lights

Transcript:

People visit Scotland for many reasons: for its beautiful countryside, historical cities and distinctive culture.

*In recent years, a different attraction has brought visitors: the skies. In most areas of the UK, you can see **up to 100 stars**, but in the darkest areas this multiplies to **over 1,000**. Recognising the value of such places, the UK government has set aside some as 'Dark Sky Parks'.*

*The majority are in **rural and remote areas**, from forests to islands and highlands. These parks attract visitors interested in stargazing.*

*In the far north, visitors can see the **Northern Lights**, a display of colourful patterns across the sky.*

Appendix C: Dialogue | Activities 3.8–3.14

1. Discuss these questions with a partner:

- Have you ever been on a trip or holiday somewhere special?
- What activities do people do in the countryside or mountains?
- Can weather affect plans or activities? How?

What is the conversation about?

2. First listening – Gist

What are the man and woman talking about?

Listen for key words and ideas from both speakers that show the topic of the conversation.

3. Second listening – Complex detail

Why didn't the woman do lots of walking?

Listen for the reason and how different parts of the conversation explain it.

4. Third listening – Evaluation

Why was the woman's guidebook useful?

Listen for useful information and how it helped in the situation.

5. Final listening – Inference

Why was it fortunate that the woman saw lots of stars?

Listen for what happened, then use that information to explain why it was fortunate.

6. Improve your answers

Make these answers better by adding more detail or a clearer explanation.

she didn't have time → _____

because of the weather → _____

7. Real-life link

Have you ever had to change your plans because of the weather or another problem? What happened? What did you do?

Appendix D: Dialogue | Model answers and transcript

Remind learners that full answers for the dialogue questions:

- include more than one idea or piece of information
- include a clear reason or explanation
- use information from different parts of the conversation where needed.

Question	Partial answer	Full answer
What are the man and woman talking about?	Scotland OR the woman's trip	the woman's trip to Scotland/a trip to Scotland/a holiday to Scotland
Why didn't the woman do lots of walking?	she didn't have time	because there was not enough daylight/it was too dark/it gets dark at 4
Why was the woman's guidebook useful?	it told her about stargazing	it gave her good advice about places to stargaze/where to see stars
Why was it fortunate that the woman saw lots of stars?	because of the weather	because the weather changed/it had been overcast/cloudy

Transcript:

- Man: *Hi Julie. How was your trip up to Scotland?*
- Woman: *It was fantastic. The views of the snow-capped mountains were breathtaking.*
- Man: *So, did you do a bit of hiking? Isn't it rather dark at this time of year?*
- Woman: *Yes. We didn't have time for any ambitious treks. The sun sets at 4, you know. But that also has its advantages.*
- Man: *Oh yes, I remember you said you planned to do some stargazing. How did that go?*
- Woman: *Well, according to the guidebook, you should be away from city lights, so we drove to a 'dark sky' area in the mountains. When we arrived, it was rather overcast. But after a while it cleared up, and we got a great view. There were thousands of stars. It was unforgettable.*
- Man: *Wow, that was fortunate.*