

How to prepare for ESOL Skills for Life

Speaking and Listening Award – Level 2



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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 2, the focus is on using spoken English confidently, flexibly and appropriately across a wide range of professional, educational and social contexts, including discussing complex issues, evaluating viewpoints, adapting communication to different audiences and participating effectively in extended interactions.

This guide has been produced to support teachers preparing learners for the Level 2 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 2 Speaking and Interactive Listening

Teaching speaking and interactive listening at Level 2

At Level 2, speaking should continue to be taught as a tool for purposeful communication rather than as a test of perfect grammatical accuracy. Learners are expected to communicate with increasing flexibility, precision and confidence across a range of professional, educational and social contexts.

In real-life situations, successful communication depends not only on being understood but also on being able to explain ideas clearly, justify opinions, respond spontaneously and adapt language appropriately to different audiences and situations. At Level 2, learners are expected to manage interaction more independently, including responding to challenge, disagreement or less predictable developments in conversation.

Teachers should focus on helping learners to:

- ▶ express ideas clearly and in detail, including opinions, explanations and arguments
- ▶ justify viewpoints using reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ respond spontaneously and build on the contributions of others
- ▶ adapt language, tone and register to suit audience, purpose and context
- ▶ maintain fluency and coherence across extended interaction, even when discussing less familiar topics.

The level of accuracy required depends on the purpose and context of the interaction.

For example:

- ▶ in discussions and collaborative tasks (for example, Task 4: Discussion), learners need to sustain interaction, respond flexibly and develop ideas clearly
- ▶ in more formal or demanding situations (for example, Task 2: Role-play), learners may need greater precision, control and awareness of tone or register.

At Level 2, learners benefit from practice that develops confidence in extended speaking, encourages flexibility and spontaneity in interaction and supports the ability to communicate effectively in more complex or less predictable situations.

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 2 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	Assessment criteria
1. Be able to obtain information from verbal communication	1.1 Interactive listening
2. Be able to speak English to communicate	2.1 Pronunciation 2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy
3. Be able to convey information	3.1 Coherence 3.2 Cohesion
4. Be able to engage in discussion with others	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 2 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, evaluate and respond flexibly. These can be used for extended discussions, collaborative tasks, role-plays and problem-solving activities.

Examples of authentic materials:

- ▶ Workplace communication (for example, emails, meeting notes, instructions, feedback)
- ▶ Online reviews, articles, comments or forum discussions
- ▶ Public information and guidance (for example, websites, FAQs, policies, comparison information)
- ▶ Service or customer communication (for example, complaints, responses, booking issues)
- ▶ Adverts, promotional materials or opinion-based media
- ▶ Timetables, transport updates or travel planning tools
- ▶ Application forms, course information or training materials

Example contexts

- ▶ Workplace and professional contexts
 - discussing responsibilities, expectations or workplace issues
 - explaining and resolving problems with colleagues or supervisors
 - responding to feedback, criticism or complaints
 - suggesting improvements or negotiating solutions
- ▶ Service and transactional context
 - resolving more complex problems or misunderstandings
 - comparing services, products or options
 - asking detailed questions before making decisions
 - explaining dissatisfaction or requesting changes
- ▶ Everyday social interaction
 - discussing experiences, opinions and future plans in detail
 - evaluating choices and justifying preferences
 - discussing advantages, disadvantages and possible outcomes
 - responding to different viewpoints in conversation
- ▶ Public information and community contexts
 - interpreting and comparing information from different sources
 - discussing local issues, services or events
 - planning and evaluating journeys or activities
 - considering factors such as cost, convenience, reliability or suitability

Web resources

At Level 2, video and audio clips can be used to introduce more complex topics, viewpoints and real-world issues. These resources can support both speaking and listening development and are most effective when learners analyse, evaluate and respond actively to what they hear through discussion and interaction.

At Level 2, these should be:

- ▶ longer (2-4 minutes)
- ▶ clearly structured but with more developed ideas or viewpoints
- ▶ based on realistic, professional, social or public-interest topics.

Examples

- ▶ short interviews, discussions or opinion-based clips
- ▶ videos presenting different viewpoints or solutions
- ▶ short explainers about social, workplace or community issues
- ▶ short reports, reviews or discussions of experiences

How to use them

- ▶ pause and ask prediction, opinion or evaluation questions
- ▶ ask learners to identify main ideas, supporting detail and viewpoints
- ▶ ask learners to summarise, compare or evaluate information
- ▶ use clips as a starting point for debate, negotiation or problem-solving
- ▶ ask learners to justify opinions and respond to different viewpoints
- ▶ extend into collaborative discussion or decision-making tasks

Classroom-ready resources

(levels indicate the relevant section of the website for Level 2)

- ▶ BBC Bitesize – videos, discussions and workplace/community topics that support explanation, evaluation and extended speaking
- ▶ Skillsworkshop ESOL (Level 2) – structured speaking and listening tasks, functional language practice and realistic discussion or role-play scenarios
- ▶ BBC Learning English (hard) – interviews, news-based clips and discussions that model more natural spoken interaction and viewpoint development
- ▶ ESL Discussion Topics – prompts for extended discussion, comparison, justification and responding to different opinions
- ▶ English Exercises (C1) – controlled practice activities for developing fluency, argumentation and response to opinion-based questions
- ▶ TED-Ed/selected TED Talks – short talks and explainers that support summarising, evaluating ideas and discussion of wider issues
- ▶ ELLLO (Level 2) – longer listening texts and conversations with varied accents, viewpoints and discussion themes

How to adapt authentic resources at Level 2

At Level 2, learners need opportunities to respond independently, develop ideas in depth and adapt their communication to different situations, audiences and viewpoints.

Simplify the task, not the situation	Keep the context realistic and allow learners to deal with more complex issues, viewpoints or decisions
Provide clear speaking goals	Set tasks that require learners to: - justify and defend opinions - compare and evaluate options - negotiate or reach a decision - respond to alternative viewpoints
Pre-teach key language (selectively)	Focus on: - expressing and justifying opinions - agreeing/disagreeing diplomatically - evaluating ideas and options - speculating or suggesting alternatives
Use prompts and support (then gradually remove)	Provide: - key vocabulary or topic prompts - discussion questions or viewpoints - brief planning time before discussion
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 challenging or less predictable situations	Introduce situations where learners need to: - respond to criticism or disagreement - negotiate solutions or compromises - explain and defend decisions - adapt to changing information or viewpoints Learners practise: - justifying and defending opinions appropriately - negotiating and responding diplomatically - adapting language and tone to the situation - responding spontaneously to challenge or disagreement - maintaining interaction in more complex discussions

Tip for teachers

Encourage learners to develop and justify their ideas by:

- ▶ giving clear reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ responding thoughtfully to different viewpoints
- ▶ comparing, evaluating and defending opinions
- ▶ extending and sustaining interaction rather than giving short responses.

General teaching strategies for Level 2 speaking and interactive listening

Train learners to match the task to a speaking strategy

At Level 2, learners need to adapt their speaking flexibly to different audiences, purposes and situations, including less predictable or more demanding interaction.

- ▶ Presentation → organise and develop ideas clearly; explain and justify opinions; compare viewpoints; use examples, evidence or experience to support ideas; maintain extended interaction
- ▶ Role-play → respond appropriately to challenge, criticism or disagreement; negotiate solutions; adapt tone and register; use functional language flexibly and appropriately
- ▶ Discussion → express and defend opinions; respond spontaneously to others' ideas; evaluate different viewpoints; negotiate meaning and help sustain the discussion

Develop interactive listening as part of speaking

At Level 2, learners need to respond flexibly and appropriately to spoken input, even when ideas are complex or less predictable. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ listen for viewpoint, attitude and intention
- ▶ respond directly to the ideas of others
- ▶ show engagement through appropriate reactions and follow-up questions
- ▶ clarify, challenge or build on ideas appropriately.

Encourage development and justification of ideas

A key shift at Level 2 is moving from supported explanation towards more sustained, flexible and evaluative speaking. Train learners to:

- ▶ justify opinions with clear reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ compare and evaluate ideas or options
- ▶ develop arguments across several turns
- ▶ respond spontaneously rather than relying on prepared responses.

Support learners with flexible speaking frameworks

Provide structures that help learners organise and extend ideas while encouraging natural interaction. For example:

- ▶ Opinion + justification + example → *'I think... because... for example...'*
- ▶ Comparison and evaluation → *'Although... I would prefer... because...'*
- ▶ Responding to another viewpoint → *'I understand your point, but...'*
- ▶ Negotiation/compromise → *'Perhaps we could... instead...'*

Build confidence through practice, variation and feedback

Learners benefit from repeated opportunities to speak in a range of contexts, with increasing spontaneity and independence.

- Model extended responses and interaction strategies
- Use pair and group work with changing viewpoints or roles
- Repeat tasks with different contexts or outcomes
- Give feedback on clarity, organisation, interaction and appropriacy, not only accuracy

Encourage flexibility and response to unexpected situations

At Level 2, learners should be able to manage less predictable interaction and adapt their communication appropriately. Build this by:

- introducing disagreement, criticism or competing viewpoints
- encouraging learners to defend or adapt their ideas
- practising negotiation, clarification and compromise
- requiring learners to respond spontaneously to follow-up questions or changes in direction.

Build UK context familiarity

Use realistic situations that reflect the types of communication learners may encounter in professional, educational and social contexts, such as:

- workplace discussions, meetings or problem-solving
- service interactions involving complaints or negotiation
- education and training contexts requiring explanation or evaluation
- discussions of public issues, experiences or community topics.

Link speaking and listening practice

At Level 2, speaking activities should develop learners' ability to interpret viewpoints, respond spontaneously and manage interaction flexibly in extended discussion.

Encourage learners to:

- listen for viewpoint, attitude and implied meaning before responding
- respond directly to another speaker's argument or opinion
- notice how speakers justify ideas, challenge opinions and negotiate meaning
- use follow-up questions and responses to deepen or redirect discussion
- reuse useful language and interaction strategies from listening texts in discussions, presentations and role-plays.

After listening activities, learners can:

- continue the discussion from a different perspective
- debate or evaluate the ideas in the recording
- role-play a related negotiation or problem-solving situation
- discuss which arguments or viewpoints were most convincing and why.

This helps learners develop more flexible and evaluative speaking and listening skills for complex real-life communication.

Level 2 Speaking and Interactive Listening review

Task 1: Topic

Learners choose a topic in advance and give a short presentation to the examiner lasting approximately 2-3 minutes. This is followed by a short discussion of approximately 1-2 minutes, where the examiner asks follow-up questions related to the topic and the learner's ideas. Learners can use notes for their talk and bring diagrams, images or other supporting materials.

The task gives learners the opportunity to present and develop their own ideas in a structured way, then respond spontaneously to questions, alternative viewpoints and challenge from the examiner. Topics can relate to personal experience, society, technology, education, work, lifestyle, media, the environment or other areas of interest. Learners should choose a topic they feel confident discussing in depth and supporting with reasons, examples or evidence.

In the presentation stage, learners are expected to:

- introduce and develop a topic clearly
- organise ideas logically
- explain opinions, arguments or viewpoints
- support ideas with reasons, examples or evidence.

In the follow-up discussion, the examiner may:

- ask for clarification or further explanation
- introduce a different opinion or perspective
- challenge an idea or argument
- ask learners to justify or expand their views.

Learners therefore need to listen carefully, respond spontaneously and adapt their language and ideas during the interaction.

At Level 2, the task focuses not only on presenting information but also on explaining and defending viewpoints, responding appropriately to challenge and sustaining interaction confidently and flexibly.

Key skills at Level 2:

- Present and develop ideas in a clear, structured way
- Explain and justify opinions using reasons, examples or evidence
- Respond spontaneously to questions and alternative viewpoints
- Adapt language, tone and register appropriately
- Sustain interaction confidently and flexibly across presentation and discussion

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can present and develop ideas, justify opinions and respond appropriately within an extended interaction. The key areas are:

2.1 Pronunciation

Learners need to speak clearly and flexibly so that meaning is maintained throughout both the presentation and follow-up discussion. At Level 2, pronunciation should support effective communication across extended interaction. This includes:

- using clear pronunciation across a wide range of familiar and topic-related language
- using stress, intonation and emphasis to support meaning and viewpoint
- distinguishing appropriately between stressed and unstressed syllables in connected speech
- maintaining intelligibility and fluency throughout extended speaking and discussion.

2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy

Learners are expected to use a broad and flexible range of spoken English appropriate to the topic, audience and situation. Accuracy should support clear and effective communication. This includes:

- using a wide range of vocabulary related to the topic
- using a variety of grammatical structures to explain, compare, justify and speculate
- adapting language, tone and register appropriately during discussion and follow-up questions.

3.1 Coherence

Learners need to organise and develop their ideas clearly so that the listener can follow both the presentation and the discussion. This includes:

- introducing and developing ideas in a logical way
- structuring arguments or explanations clearly
- supporting viewpoints with reasons, examples or evidence
- responding with extended, developed answers rather than short responses.

3.2 Cohesion

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

- using a wide range of linking and discourse markers (for example, however, therefore, on the other hand, for example)
- showing clear relationships between ideas, arguments and examples
- developing ideas smoothly across extended speaking and interaction.

4.1 Participation

Learners need to participate actively and constructively in the follow-up discussion, responding appropriately to questions, challenge and alternative viewpoints. This includes:

- contributing relevant ideas and opinions to extend the discussion
- responding appropriately to the examiner's questions and comments
- expressing agreement, disagreement or alternative viewpoints appropriately
- using appropriate phrases to interrupt, clarify, develop or change topic when needed
- helping sustain interaction confidently and appropriately across the discussion.

Sample follow-up questions

Clarification/ explanation	Opinion/justification	Challenge/ alternative viewpoint	Speculation/ reflection
- Can you explain what you mean by that? - Why do you think that is important? - Could you give an example of that? - What do you think is the main advantage or disadvantage?	- Why do you feel that way? - What makes you think that? - Do you think that is always true? Why? - How would you support that argument?	- I'm not sure I agree with that because... - Some people would argue that... What do you think? - But couldn't the opposite also be true? - How would you respond to someone who disagrees with you?	- Do you think this will change in the future? - What might happen if this continues? - How would things be different if...? - What role do you think society, government, education should play in this?

Classroom suggestions

1. Choosing and developing a presentation topic

Ask learners to choose a topic they feel confident discussing in depth. Encourage learners to:

- choose a topic with clear opinions, arguments or viewpoints
- think about why the topic is important or interesting
- identify examples, experiences or evidence they can use to support their ideas
- organise ideas into a clear structure (introduction → main points → conclusion).

2. Structuring and presenting ideas

Give learners a topic and ask them to prepare a short presentation that:

- introduces the topic clearly
- develops 2-3 main points
- includes reasons, examples or evidence
- ends with a clear conclusion or opinion.

Encourage learners to use discourse markers and linking language (for example, firstly, however and therefore).

3. Developing opinions and arguments

Ask learners to express and support opinions by:

- ▶ giving reasons and examples
- ▶ comparing advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ explaining consequences or implications
- ▶ responding to alternative viewpoints.

Encourage learners to move beyond personal preference and develop more reasoned explanations.

4. Follow-up question and challenge practice

In pairs or small groups, one learner gives a short presentation and the others ask follow-up questions. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ ask for clarification or examples
- ▶ challenge ideas politely
- ▶ introduce alternative viewpoints
- ▶ respond by justifying, expanding or reformulating ideas.

5. Developing spontaneity and interaction

Focus on responding naturally to follow-up questions rather than relying on memorised presentations. Learners practise:

- ▶ listening carefully to questions and comments
- ▶ responding spontaneously and appropriately
- ▶ developing answers across several turns
- ▶ adapting ideas and language during interaction.

6. Responding to challenge and alternative viewpoints

Introduce disagreement or competing opinions during practice, such as:

- ▶ *'I'm not sure I agree because...'*
- ▶ *'Some people would argue that...'*
- ▶ *'What would you say to someone who disagrees?'*

Learners practise:

- ▶ defending and justifying opinions
- ▶ responding diplomatically to challenge
- ▶ maintaining interaction confidently and flexibly
- ▶ reformulating or clarifying ideas when challenged.

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, housing or services. The task lasts about four minutes.

The examiner takes on a role (for example, a landlord, a manager, a service provider or an organiser), and the learner must interact with them to manage a difficult situation, resolve a

problem or negotiate an outcome.

The task is not known in advance. At Level 2, the interaction involves more demanding communication, where learners may need to:

- explain and justify their position
- respond to criticism or disagreement
- express dissatisfaction or challenge another person appropriately
- negotiate solutions or compromises
- adapt their language and tone as the interaction develops.

Unlike simpler transactional role-plays, this task reflects situations where communication may involve disagreement, frustration or competing viewpoints. The examiner is expected to challenge or criticise the learner as part of the interaction, and learners need to respond appropriately while maintaining effective communication.

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

- asking relevant questions and responding appropriately
- explaining situations clearly and in detail
- expressing opinions, concerns or dissatisfaction diplomatically
- justifying decisions or requests
- suggesting and negotiating possible solutions
- adapting to new or unexpected information.

This task reflects real-life situations where learners may need to resolve problems, negotiate outcomes or manage difficult interactions confidently and appropriately in workplace, service or community contexts.

Key skills:

- Respond appropriately to criticism, disagreement or challenge
- Explain and justify opinions, actions or requests clearly
- Use functional language for complaints, negotiation and problem-solving
- Adapt tone, register and language appropriately to the situation
- Maintain interaction confidently and flexibly during difficult or less predictable communication

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can manage a demanding interaction involving problem-solving, negotiation and response to challenge, using both speaking and listening skills.

1.1 Interactive listening

Learners must listen carefully and respond appropriately, particularly when dealing with criticism, disagreement or changing information.

This includes:

- understanding detailed information, viewpoint and intention
- responding appropriately to criticism, complaints or challenge
- recognising when clarification, explanation or negotiation is needed
- adapting responses as the interaction develops.

2.1 Pronunciation

Learners need to speak clearly, confidently and appropriately so that meaning is maintained throughout extended interaction. This includes:

- using clear pronunciation across a wider range of familiar and less familiar language
- using stress and intonation to support meaning, emphasis and attitude
- maintaining intelligibility and fluency during more demanding interaction.

2.2 Language range, accuracy and appropriacy

Learners are expected to use a broad and flexible range of language appropriate to the situation and relationship between speakers. This includes:

- using a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures to explain, justify, negotiate and respond
- using functional language for complaints, criticism, disagreement, negotiation and problem-solving
- adapting language, tone and register appropriately as the interaction develops.

4.2 Expressing opinions

Learners need to express, justify and respond to opinions appropriately during discussion and negotiation. At Level 2, this includes managing disagreement and criticism in a controlled and diplomatic way. This includes:

- expressing and supporting opinions with reasons or examples
- responding to and challenging other viewpoints appropriately
- expressing disagreement or criticism diplomatically
- making suggestions and helping move the interaction towards a conclusion or solution
- responding appropriately to criticism, alternative ideas or proposals.

4.3 Engaging with others

Learners need to take an active role in managing and sustaining the interaction, particularly when opinions differ or problems need to be resolved. This includes:

- responding appropriately to questions, criticism and alternative viewpoints
- expressing concerns, opinions or dissatisfaction diplomatically
- negotiating solutions, compromises or outcomes
- maintaining interaction confidently and helping move the discussion towards resolution.

Sample role-play prompt

Role-play prompt	I am your landlord. I promised to repair your broken washing machine several weeks ago but have done nothing yet. You are not happy about this.
Examiner notes	- Say why you haven't resolved the problem yet. - Criticise the candidate.

Classroom suggestions

1. Role-plays involving conflict or negotiation

Give learners role cards that involve disagreement, criticism or competing expectations rather than simple transactions. For example:

- a landlord has not repaired something important
- a service provider has handled a problem badly
- a colleague or manager is unhappy about a situation
- a customer is making a complaint

Learners must:

- explain and justify their position
- respond to criticism or challenge
- negotiate a solution or compromise
- maintain appropriate tone and language.

2. Functional language for complaints, criticism and negotiation

Practise key language for:

- expressing dissatisfaction → *'I'm not happy about...'*, *'The problem is that...'*
- responding to criticism → *'I understand your point, however...'*
- negotiating → *'Would it be possible to...?'*, *'Perhaps we could...'*
- defending opinions diplomatically → *'I see what you mean, but...'*

Focus on:

- appropriacy of tone
- polite disagreement
- maintaining constructive interaction.

3. Managing disagreement and challenge

Practise short interactions where learners must respond to:

- complaints or criticism
- disagreement or opposing viewpoints
- refusal or rejection of a suggestion.

Encourage learners to:

- remain calm and diplomatic
- justify their ideas clearly
- respond constructively to challenge
- adapt their language as the interaction develops.

4. Developing negotiation and problem-solving

Move beyond simple question-answer exchanges. Train learners to:

- explain and defend their viewpoint

- respond to alternative suggestions
- negotiate towards an agreement or solution
- balance assertiveness with politeness.

Encourage learners to sustain interaction across several turns rather than relying on short responses.

5. Unpredictable and developing role-play practice

Introduce changes or complications during the interaction. For example:

- 'That solution won't work.'*
- 'I don't think that's acceptable.'*
- 'There's another problem you haven't considered.'*
- 'I still don't think this is fair.'*

Learners practise:

- responding spontaneously
- adapting ideas and language
- refining or defending arguments
- maintaining interaction under pressure.

6. Reaching and negotiating outcomes

Set a clear goal or outcome for the interaction (for example, resolving a complaint or agreeing on a compromise). Learners must:

- explain the problem or concern clearly
- respond appropriately to criticism or disagreement
- negotiate possible solutions
- reach, reject or modify an agreement appropriately.

Focus on helping learners manage the interaction confidently, appropriately and constructively.

Task 4: Discussion

Learners take part in a 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 expected to contribute actively and respond to each other's ideas.

At Level 2, discussion topics are broader and more abstract than at earlier levels and may involve social issues, behaviour, technology, education, media or community life. Learners are expected to express and justify opinions, respond to different viewpoints and develop ideas through extended interaction.

Unlike Entry 3 and Level 1, the task does not focus primarily on reaching a practical plan or solution. Instead, learners are expected to explore the ideas in the prompt, discuss pros and cons, consider different perspectives and respond thoughtfully to the contributions, while working towards a shared view or consensus.

The task lasts up to five minutes and requires learners to sustain discussion, respond

spontaneously and maintain interaction with increasing flexibility and independence.

Key skills:

- ▶ Contribute relevant and developed ideas to discussion on abstract topics
- ▶ Express, justify and evaluate opinions and viewpoints
- ▶ Respond appropriately to agreement, disagreement and alternative perspectives
- ▶ Develop and extend discussion across multiple turns
- ▶ Help maintain and shape the direction of the interaction

What is being assessed

In this task, the assessment focuses on how effectively learners can participate in extended informal discussion, express and develop viewpoints, and interact constructively with others.

1.1 Interactive listening

Learners must listen carefully and respond appropriately to the ideas, opinions and reactions of others throughout the discussion. This includes:

- ▶ understanding main ideas, supporting detail and viewpoint
- ▶ responding directly and appropriately to others' contributions
- ▶ recognising agreement, disagreement or challenge
- ▶ adapting responses as the discussion develops.

4.1 Participation

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

- ▶ contributing relevant ideas throughout the discussion
- ▶ responding to and building on others' contributions
- ▶ helping maintain and develop interaction across several turns
- ▶ using appropriate phrases to interrupt, clarify or change topic when needed.

4.2 Expressing opinions

Learners are expected to express, justify and respond to opinions appropriately during discussion on abstract or less familiar topics. This includes:

- ▶ expressing and supporting opinions with reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ comparing and evaluating ideas or viewpoints
- ▶ agreeing or disagreeing appropriately and diplomatically
- ▶ responding to criticism, challenge or alternative opinions.

4.3. Engaging with others

Learners need to interact actively and collaboratively to sustain and develop the discussion. This includes:

- ▶ asking questions and inviting others to contribute
- ▶ responding spontaneously to new ideas or viewpoints
- ▶ developing, challenging or extending ideas appropriately
- ▶ maintaining interaction confidently and flexibly throughout the discussion.

Sample role-play prompt

Discussion prompt

Some people believe that computer games are very harmful to children. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of young people playing computer games and suggest solutions to any problems you see.

Classroom suggestions

1. Discussion tasks based on abstract topics and viewpoints

Give learners discussion tasks that involve broader or more abstract issues rather than practical planning tasks. For example:

- ▶ the advantages and disadvantages of social media
- ▶ whether computer games are harmful to children
- ▶ the impact of technology on daily life
- ▶ how governments or schools should respond to a problem

Learners should:

- ▶ express opinions clearly
- ▶ justify their ideas
- ▶ respond to different viewpoints
- ▶ develop discussion across several turns.

2. Developing and supporting arguments

Encourage learners to move beyond simple opinions. Train learners to:

- ▶ express a viewpoint clearly
- ▶ support it with reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ explain consequences or implications
- ▶ compare alternative viewpoints (for example, *'Although computer games can be educational, I think too much screen time can affect children's health and social skills.'*).

3. Comparing, evaluating and responding to viewpoints

Give learners two or more viewpoints, solutions or arguments and ask them to:

- ▶ compare advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ evaluate different ideas
- ▶ agree or disagree with reasons
- ▶ respond to criticism or challenge.

This helps learners develop more flexible and evaluative discussion skills.

4. Managing interaction and discussion naturally

Practise phrases that help learners participate actively and manage discussion appropriately. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ invite others to contribute
- ▶ interrupt politely when appropriate
- ▶ respond directly to others' ideas
- ▶ challenge opinions diplomatically.

Provide phrases such as:

- ▶ *'I see your point, but...'*
- ▶ *'That may be true, however...'*
- ▶ *'Can I add something here?'*
- ▶ *'What's your view on that?'*

5. Sustaining and extending discussion

Set tasks where learners need to keep discussion going rather than simply reaching a quick decision. Learners practise:

- ▶ developing ideas across several turns
- ▶ asking follow-up questions
- ▶ expanding or refining opinions
- ▶ adapting ideas as the discussion develops.

Encourage learners to respond spontaneously rather than relying on prepared responses.

6. Responding to disagreement and alternative viewpoints

Give learners tasks where opinions are likely to differ. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ agree or disagree diplomatically
- ▶ justify and defend their views
- ▶ respond constructively to challenge
- ▶ acknowledge alternative perspectives appropriately.

Provide phrases such as:

- ▶ *'I understand what you mean, but...'*
- ▶ *'That's an interesting point, however...'*
- ▶ *'I'm not entirely convinced that...'*
- ▶ *'Perhaps the problem is more complicated because...'*

Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, Independent Listening (Task 3) includes two extracts:

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

The monologue includes more extended spoken texts, such as instructional or informational audio, parts of presentations and extended explanations. These extracts may contain more detailed, complex or qualified information, requiring learners to follow explanations, identify supporting detail and understand how ideas are developed.

The dialogue involves two speakers discussing the same topic, often expressing overlapping, contrasting or more nuanced viewpoints. Learners need to follow how ideas develop across the interaction, understand how speakers respond to each other and recognise differences in opinion, attitude or perspective.

At Level 2, the two extracts are linked by a common theme. The dialogue often develops, extends or complicates ideas introduced in the monologue by introducing alternative viewpoints, experiences or interpretations. The listening questions become more varied and demanding, requiring learners to interpret viewpoint, evaluate ideas, understand implied meaning and identify more complex supporting detail.

Each extract is longer than at previous levels and is played twice. The texts may include less familiar topics and more complex information, but they continue to reflect realistic situations learners may encounter in professional, educational or social contexts.

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, purpose and viewpoint (gist)
- ▶ identifying detailed and supporting information
- ▶ recognising and evaluating opinions, attitudes and arguments
- ▶ understanding implied meaning and less direct information (inference).

At Level 2, learners are expected to listen selectively and interpret spoken meaning with greater flexibility and independence, including responding to complex, qualified or less directly 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, precise and fully developed, including relevant explanation or interpretation where needed. Only one mark will be awarded where the answer is correct but incomplete, insufficiently developed or lacking 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 2 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	- extended and less predictable spoken texts - may include complex explanations, arguments or evaluation - ideas may be layered, qualified or less explicitly structured - interpret meaning, viewpoint, tone and possible bias
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	- extended discussions involving multiple or contrasting viewpoints - may include disagreement, negotiation or discussion of abstract topics - speakers may interrupt, challenge or build on each other's ideas - interpret tone, attitude, intention and nuance across the interaction

Teaching listening at Level 2

At Level 2, listening is a more independent and interpretative process. Learners are expected to engage with longer and more complex spoken texts, including different viewpoints, less direct meaning and more detailed supporting information.

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

- identify relevant and supporting information
- recognise how ideas, arguments and viewpoints are developed
- interpret attitude, opinion and implied meaning
- respond flexibly to more complex or less predictable spoken language.

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, viewpoint or possible arguments)
- setting a clear purpose for each listen (for example, gist, supporting detail, evaluation, inference)
- encouraging selective listening for relevant information and viewpoint
- using repeated listening with different focuses
- helping learners explain and justify how they arrived at their answers.

At Level 2, learners also need support in managing more complex listening demands. Spoken texts may contain less familiar language, more developed explanations or opinions that are not stated directly.

Teachers can support this by encouraging learners to:

- ▶ focus on overall meaning and viewpoint rather than every word
- ▶ listen for how ideas are connected and developed
- ▶ use tone, emphasis and context to interpret attitude and intention
- ▶ continue listening and adjusting understanding as new information develops.

At this level, learners benefit from tasks that require them to compare viewpoints, evaluate ideas, identify supporting evidence and interpret implied meaning across longer stretches of spoken language. By developing these strategies, learners become more confident and flexible listeners, able to cope with more detailed, abstract and less predictable spoken communication in professional, educational and social contexts.

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 viewpoint and implied meaning, and respond appropriately while the interaction continues to develop. Listening activities can therefore support the development of speaking, discussion and interaction skills.

At Level 2, learners benefit from analysing how speakers:

- ▶ present and justify opinions or arguments
- ▶ respond to disagreement or alternative viewpoints
- ▶ negotiate meaning and develop discussion
- ▶ adapt tone, register and language to different situations or audiences.

Teachers can use listening texts to help learners notice:

- ▶ how speakers structure and develop ideas
- ▶ how opinions are supported with reasons, examples or evidence
- ▶ language used for agreement, disagreement, challenge and negotiation
- ▶ how tone, stress and intonation affect meaning and attitude.

After listening, learners can:

- ▶ continue or extend the discussion from a different perspective
- ▶ role-play a related situation involving negotiation or disagreement
- ▶ respond to or challenge opinions from the recording
- ▶ compare viewpoints and discuss their own responses to the topic.

This helps learners develop both comprehension and interaction skills while building confidence in responding flexibly, expressing viewpoints and maintaining communication in more complex or 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 2 Independent Listening

Authentic resources for classroom activities

Use authentic audio sources that reflect the types of listening learners may encounter outside the classroom. At Level 2, these may include longer, less predictable spoken texts with more developed viewpoints, explanations or discussion.

Teachers can:

- ▶ use existing recordings (for example, interviews, discussions, presentations, podcasts)
- ▶ adapt or select sections of longer audio texts
- ▶ record their own dialogues or monologues to focus on specific listening skills or interaction patterns.

Examples of authentic audio sources

- ▶ Public information and media
 - news reports, interviews, discussions, public information clips
- ▶ Workplace and professional communication
 - meetings, training explanations, customer complaints, workplace problem-solving
- ▶ Community and social issues
 - talks, discussions or interviews about social, educational or environmental topics
- ▶ Everyday and service interactions
 - conversations involving disagreement, negotiation or decision-making
- ▶ Explanatory, evaluative or opinion-based audio
 - presentations, reviews, debates or discussions comparing viewpoints

Types of listening tasks teachers can create

- ▶ Extended dialogues and discussions
 - negotiating, debating issues, responding to different viewpoints
- ▶ Structured monologues and presentations
 - explaining processes, presenting arguments, evaluating ideas or giving advice
- ▶ Interpretative listening tasks
 - identifying viewpoint, attitude, supporting evidence or implied meaning
- ▶ Collaborative listening tasks
 - comparing interpretations, evaluating opinions or discussing responses to a topic

Web resources

At Level 2, video and audio clips can be used to introduce more complex topics, viewpoints and discussion. These resources can support both listening and speaking development and are most effective when learners actively interpret, evaluate and respond to what they hear.

At Level 2, these should be:

- ▶ longer (for example, 2-4 minutes)
- ▶ clearly structured but with more developed ideas or viewpoints
- ▶ based on realistic, professional, social or public-interest topics.

Examples

- ▶ short interviews, discussions or debates
- ▶ presentations or explainers on social or workplace topics
- ▶ clips where speakers compare ideas or express contrasting opinions
- ▶ short reports, podcasts or opinion-based media clips

How to use them

- ▶ pause and ask prediction, evaluation or viewpoint questions
- ▶ use staged listening (gist → supporting detail → evaluation → inference)
- ▶ focus on identifying viewpoint, attitude and supporting evidence
- ▶ ask learners what language, tone or detail helped them interpret meaning
- ▶ ask learners to compare viewpoints or evaluate arguments
- ▶ extend into debate, discussion or follow-up speaking activities

Classroom-ready resources

(levels indicate the relevant section of the website for Level 2)

- ▶ BBC Bitesize – videos, discussions and listening tasks linked to workplace, social and community topics with more developed viewpoints and explanations
- ▶ Skillsworkshop ESOL (Level 2) – structured listening and speaking tasks focusing on discussion, viewpoint, inference and real-life communication
- ▶ ELLLO (C1) – extended monologues and dialogues with transcripts, varied viewpoints and more natural spoken interaction
- ▶ BBC Learning English (hard) – interviews, reports and discussion-based clips with developed ideas, opinion and supporting detail
- ▶ ESL Lounge (advanced) – listening tasks focusing on detailed comprehension, inference and interpretation
- ▶ Listen A Minute – short opinion-based recordings useful for gist, evaluation and follow-up discussion or debate
- ▶ Talk English (advanced) – dialogues and discussions for practising interaction, negotiation and viewpoint
- ▶ Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (difficult) – graded listening tasks with more complex comprehension and interpretation focus
- ▶ Luke's English Podcast (selected clips) – authentic extended listening for viewpoint, attitude, inference and discussion work
- ▶ ESOL Courses (advanced) – interactive listening activities linked to realistic social, workplace and public-information contexts

How to adapt authentic resources at Level 2

At Level 2, learners should work with more authentic and less predictable spoken language, while continuing to develop flexible and independent listening strategies.

Select authentic spoken texts carefully	Use authentic audio with natural speech, developed viewpoints and interaction, but choose extracts with a clear focus or accessible structure
Pre-teach key language selectively	Focus on essential topic vocabulary, viewpoint language, discourse markers and less familiar expressions that support understanding
Provide a clear listening purpose	For example, 'What viewpoint does the speaker express?', 'How do the speakers disagree?', 'What evidence supports the argument?', 'What is implied rather than stated directly?'
Use staged and layered listening tasks	First listen for gist and viewpoint, then for supporting detail, evaluation, inference or comparison of ideas
Encourage interpretation and evaluation	Focus on how speakers develop arguments, express attitude, support opinions and respond to alternative viewpoints
Use comparison and discussion tasks	Ask learners to compare viewpoints, evaluate ideas or discuss how their own opinions relate to the recording

Tips for teachers

Train learners to listen flexibly and interpret meaning across extended spoken texts, focusing on viewpoint, supporting detail, attitude and implied meaning rather than trying to understand every word.

Glossary of listening subskills

Gist

Definition

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

- ▶ What is this mainly about?
- ▶ What is the speaker trying to explain or discuss?
- ▶ What is the overall point or purpose?
- ▶ What viewpoint or issue is being introduced?

What it looks like in Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, learners need to understand the overall meaning and purpose of longer, more developed spoken texts, including:

- ▶ the main point or purpose of a programme, talk or discussion
- ▶ the overall topic or issue being discussed
- ▶ the general viewpoint or focus of the speakers
- ▶ how the topic develops across extended speech or interaction.

Learners may need to:

- ▶ listen across longer stretches of speech
- ▶ identify the main ideas among supporting detail
- ▶ recognise how speakers introduce, develop or compare viewpoints
- ▶ follow the overall direction of a discussion, even when ideas are less directly structured.

Examples from the Level 2 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'What is the point of this programme?'* (listen for the overall purpose, focus or viewpoint of the programme rather than isolated details).
2. (Dialogue) *'What are the man and woman talking about?'* (listen for the overall issue or discussion topic by combining information and viewpoints from both speakers).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a longer recording (2-4 minutes) such as a discussion, interview or presentation. Before listening, ask learners to predict the topic, purpose or possible viewpoints. Learners listen once and write a short summary (8-12 words). Play the recording again and allow learners to refine their answers. Discuss which key ideas, repeated themes or viewpoints helped learners identify the gist.
2. Prepare several recordings with different purposes or viewpoints (for example, explaining a problem, presenting an argument, discussing advantages and disadvantages). Before listening, check learners understand the possible purposes or viewpoints. Learners listen and match each recording to its overall focus or purpose. After checking answers, ask learners to explain what information helped them decide.

3. Play a recording and provide three possible summaries or viewpoints. 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 to follow both speakers and how their ideas connect or differ. Discuss why the other options are less accurate, focusing on overall meaning rather than individual details.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Focusing too much on unfamiliar vocabulary or detail
- ▶ Losing track of the overall point in longer spoken texts
- ▶ Difficulty recognising the speaker's overall purpose or viewpoint
- ▶ Following one speaker in a dialogue but missing how ideas connect across the interaction

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding the purpose of a presentation, interview or discussion
- ▶ Recognising the main issue being discussed in workplace or community settings
- ▶ Understanding the overall viewpoint in media or public information
- ▶ Identifying the focus of a conversation involving different opinions or perspectives

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to understand the overall meaning and purpose of spoken English quickly, even when texts are longer, more detailed or include different viewpoints. Listening for gist helps learners follow discussions, understand explanations and recognise the main focus of spoken communication in workplace, educational and social contexts.

Detail

Definition

Listening for detail means identifying specific information within what is being said, including important facts, descriptions or supporting information. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What specific information is given?
- ▶ What does the speaker say about this point?
- ▶ Which detail is important here?

What it looks like in Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, learners need to identify relevant detail within longer, more complex spoken texts. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ specific factual information (for example, names, figures, products, examples or descriptions)
- ▶ supporting detail within explanations or arguments
- ▶ information that may be surrounded by less relevant or contrasting detail
- ▶ details linked to viewpoint, comparison or evaluation.

At this level, the answer is usually stated directly, but learners must listen selectively and distinguish important information from supporting or distracting detail.

Learners may need to:

- ▶ follow longer stretches of speech before hearing the answer
- ▶ recognise which information is relevant to the question
- ▶ distinguish between similar or competing pieces of information
- ▶ identify supporting detail linked to a wider point or explanation.

Examples from the Level 2 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'What is the name of the cheapest range?'* (listen for a specific detail within a longer explanation or comparison and distinguish it from other product or price information).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Give learners a specific detail question before listening (for example, *'Which product...?'*, *'What is the cheapest option?'*). Ask learners to underline the key words in the question. Play a longer recording and ask learners to listen only for the relevant information. Play the recording again and ask learners what words or phrases helped them identify the answer.
2. Play a recording containing several similar details, such as different products, prices, opinions or examples. Provide 2-3 possible answers. Learners choose the correct option, then listen again to confirm. Discuss how learners distinguished the correct detail from other similar information.
3. Play a longer recording and ask learners several detail questions linked to different parts of the text. Encourage learners to listen selectively rather than trying to understand every word. After listening, ask learners to explain where in the recording they heard each answer and how they identified the relevant detail.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Focusing on less important information instead of the key detail
- ▶ Becoming confused by similar details or comparisons
- ▶ Losing track of the question during longer spoken texts
- ▶ Trying to understand everything rather than listening selectively

UK life examples

- ▶ Identifying key details in presentations, talks or workplace briefings
- ▶ Understanding specific information in customer or service interactions
- ▶ Listening for important details in product, travel or service information
- ▶ Following factual information in discussions, interviews or media clips

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to identify important information within longer spoken texts that contain explanations, comparisons or supporting detail. Listening for detail helps learners focus on relevant information, follow spoken communication accurately and respond appropriately in workplace, educational and social situations.

Complex detail

Definition

Listening for complex detail means understanding several connected pieces of information and how they relate to each other within a spoken text or interaction. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What information explains the situation?
- ▶ How are the ideas connected?
- ▶ What exactly is the problem, reason or outcome?

What it looks like in Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, listening for complex detail focuses on understanding how information is developed across extended spoken interaction. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ detailed explanations or descriptions
- ▶ how speakers clarify, develop or qualify information
- ▶ connections between problems, reasons and outcomes
- ▶ supporting detail linked to opinions, complaints or evaluation.

At this level, learners need to:

- ▶ listen across several turns or longer explanations
- ▶ identify the most relevant detail among additional information
- ▶ connect information from different parts of the interaction
- ▶ recognise how speakers expand, clarify or refine meaning.

Learners may also need to distinguish between:

- ▶ the main problem and supporting explanation
- ▶ general comments and precise detail
- ▶ implied information and directly stated detail.

Examples from the Level 2 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Dialogue) *'What exactly was wrong with the woman's pasta?'* (listen for the specific explanation of the problem and distinguish it from more general complaints or comments in the discussion).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a dialogue and give learners a detailed *'what exactly'* or *'why'* question before listening. Ask learners to underline key words in the question. Learners listen and identify the part of the conversation where the explanation develops. After listening, ask learners which details were essential to the answer and which were less important.
2. Play a dialogue where speakers describe a problem, complaint or misunderstanding. Ask learners to identify the main issue, supporting explanations or examples, and the outcome or response. Learners explain how the information develops across the interaction.
3. Play a dialogue and provide 2-3 possible explanations or interpretations of the situation. Learners choose the best answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the correct answer depends on combining information from different parts of the conversation rather than listening for isolated words.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Focusing on one detail and missing the fuller explanation
- ▶ Difficulty distinguishing key detail from supporting information
- ▶ Losing track of how ideas connect across longer interaction
- ▶ Misunderstanding detail because of additional or contrasting information

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding detailed explanations in workplace or service situations
- ▶ Following complaints, problems or misunderstandings in conversation
- ▶ Identifying exactly why something happened or went wrong
- ▶ Understanding how explanations and responses develop across interaction

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to understand detailed explanations, problems and responses within longer spoken interaction. Listening for complex detail helps learners identify important information, understand how ideas connect and respond appropriately in workplace, educational and social situations.

Evaluation

Definition

Listening for evaluation means understanding, interpreting and judging information, opinions or viewpoints based on what the speaker says. It answers questions like:

- ▶ What judgement or decision needs to be made?
- ▶ What is important or relevant here?
- ▶ How do the speakers evaluate or compare ideas?
- ▶ What conclusions can we draw from the information?

What it looks like in Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, learners need to evaluate information, opinions and viewpoints across both monologues and dialogues.

Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ how speakers assess or compare information
- ▶ what conclusions or judgements are being made
- ▶ differences in viewpoint, behaviour or approach
- ▶ how information supports decisions, recommendations or evaluation.

At this level, learners may need to:

- ▶ interpret information across longer stretches of speech
- ▶ compare ideas or actions between speakers
- ▶ identify what is important, relevant or significant
- ▶ understand how speakers justify opinions or decisions.

Evaluation at Level 2 is more interpretative and may require learners to combine detail, viewpoint and context rather than relying only on directly stated information.

Examples from the Level 2 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'What judgement do you need to make after a downshift?'* (listen for the explanation and identify the decision or evaluation the speaker says is necessary).
2. (Dialogue) *'What have the man and woman been doing differently?'* (listen for how the speakers compare their behaviour, actions or approaches and identify the relevant difference).

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a recording where the speaker explains a process, recommendation or decision. Before listening, ask learners what kind of judgement or evaluation they may need to identify. Learners listen and explain what the speaker thinks is important and why.
2. Play a dialogue where two speakers compare experiences, opinions or actions. Learners identify similarities and differences, which approach or opinion is preferred and how the speakers justify their views. After listening, ask learners what information helped them make their judgement.
3. Play a recording and provide 2-3 possible conclusions, recommendations or interpretations. Learners choose the best answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the correct answer is more appropriate, focusing on how the speakers support or evaluate ideas.

Common learner difficulties

- Identifying information but not recognising its significance
- Difficulty comparing viewpoints or actions across speakers
- Relying on personal opinion instead of evidence from the recording
- Misunderstanding how speakers justify or evaluate ideas

UK life examples

- Comparing advice, options or recommendations before making decisions
- Understanding evaluations in workplace or educational discussions
- Recognising how speakers assess situations, problems or solutions
- Interpreting viewpoints in interviews, discussions or media content

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday life, learners often need to evaluate spoken information, compare viewpoints and make decisions based on what they hear. Listening for evaluation helps learners understand how speakers assess ideas, justify decisions and compare options in workplace, educational and social contexts.

Inference

Definition

Listening for inference means understanding meaning that is suggested rather than stated directly. It involves using context, supporting information, tone and viewpoint to work out what the speaker really means. It answers questions like:

- What does the speaker mean or imply?
- Why is this example being used?
- What conclusion can we draw from the information?
- What is important to the speaker?

What it looks like in Level 2 Independent Listening

At Level 2, learners need to interpret implied meaning within longer and more complex spoken texts, including both monologues and dialogues. Common question types include identifying:

- ▶ implied reasons, attitudes or priorities
- ▶ why a speaker uses a comparison, example or metaphor
- ▶ conclusions based on several connected pieces of information
- ▶ viewpoints or values that are suggested rather than stated directly.

At this level, learners need to:

- ▶ interpret meaning across longer stretches of speech
- ▶ combine information from different parts of the text
- ▶ recognise how examples or comparisons support meaning
- ▶ understand what speakers imply through emphasis, choice of detail or evaluation.

Inference at Level 2 often depends on understanding not only what is said, but why the speaker says it in that way.

Examples from the Level 2 Independent Listening sample test

1. (Monologue) *'Why does the presenter talk about a 'ladder'?' (listen for how the comparison is used to explain levels or choices, rather than focusing only on the literal meaning).*
2. (Dialogue) *'What is important to the woman?' (listen to the woman's reactions, opinions and comments to understand what she values, even though she does not state it directly).*

Classroom/practice suggestions

1. Play a recording and ask learners an inference question before listening (for example, *'Why does the speaker use this example?' or 'What is important to the speaker?'*). Learners listen and identify the information that helps them form a conclusion. After listening, ask learners to explain how the different clues connect to the answer.
2. Play a recording where speakers imply opinions or attitudes rather than stating them directly. Ask learners what the speaker really means and why they say it this way. Provide options if needed. After listening, discuss which words, examples or tone helped learners infer meaning.
3. Play a recording and provide three possible interpretations or conclusions. Learners choose the best answer, then listen again to confirm. Discuss why the correct answer depends on interpreting implied meaning across the text rather than identifying one key word or phrase.

Common learner difficulties

- ▶ Expecting the answer to be stated directly
- ▶ Focusing too much on individual words rather than overall meaning
- ▶ Difficulty understanding implied attitude or viewpoint
- ▶ Uncertainty when more than one interpretation seems possible

UK life examples

- ▶ Understanding implied meaning in workplace or social discussions
- ▶ Recognising attitudes or priorities in conversations and presentations
- ▶ Interpreting comparisons, examples or humour
- ▶ Understanding what speakers suggest without stating directly

Why it matters for adult life in the UK

In everyday communication, speakers often imply meaning rather than stating everything directly. Learners need to interpret attitude, intention and implied viewpoint in order to respond appropriately and participate confidently in workplace, educational and social situations.

General teaching strategies for Level 2 independent listening**Train learners to match the question type to a listening strategy**

At Level 2, learners need to apply listening strategies flexibly and independently across longer, more complex spoken texts.

- ▶ Gist → listen for overall purpose, viewpoint and main argument; identify how the topic develops
- ▶ Detail → listen selectively for relevant supporting information within extended speech
- ▶ Complex detail → connect information across speakers or across different parts of the text; identify explanations, comparisons and supporting detail
- ▶ Evaluation → identify how speakers assess, compare or justify ideas, actions or viewpoints
- ▶ Inference → interpret implied meaning, attitude, priorities and viewpoint using context, tone and supporting information

Train learners to listen flexibly and selectively

At Level 2, learners need to move beyond listening for isolated answers and interpret meaning across extended spoken interaction. Encourage learners to:

- ▶ focus carefully on what the question is asking before listening
- ▶ identify which information is relevant and which can be ignored
- ▶ follow how ideas and viewpoints develop across the text
- ▶ continue listening and adjusting understanding as new information emerges.

Build listening in stages

Use a structured listening routine while encouraging increasing independence:

- ▶ Before listening → predict topic, viewpoint, possible arguments or interaction
- ▶ First listening → identify gist, purpose and overall viewpoint
- ▶ Second listening → focus on supporting detail, comparison, evaluation or inference
- ▶ Third listening (if needed) → confirm meaning, viewpoint or interpretation

At Level 2, learners should begin adjusting their listening focus independently depending on the demands of the question and the nature of the spoken text.

Encourage justification, interpretation and evaluation

At this level, learners should explain not only what the answer is but how they interpreted the information. Use prompts such as:

- ▶ *'What in the recording helped you reach that conclusion?'*
- ▶ *'Why do you think the speaker says this?'*
- ▶ *'What suggests that viewpoint or attitude?'*

Encourage learners to:

- refer to specific phrases, examples or supporting detail
- explain how ideas connect across the text
- justify interpretations using evidence from the recording
- avoid relying on personal opinion instead of the spoken text.

Develop listening for viewpoint and implied meaning

Learners may still focus too heavily on individual words or factual detail. Encourage learners to:

- focus on overall meaning, viewpoint and purpose
- listen for how speakers develop or support ideas
- use tone, emphasis and context to interpret attitude and intention
- recognise that meaning is often implied rather than stated directly.

Build UK context familiarity

Use realistic listening situations that reflect more complex spoken communication, such as:

- presentations, interviews or discussions on social or workplace topics
- workplace communication involving explanation, evaluation or negotiation
- conversations involving disagreement, comparison or decision-making
- media, educational or public-information discussions involving different viewpoints.

Link listening and speaking practice

At Level 2, listening activities should support learners in developing more flexible and evaluative spoken interaction, not just comprehension skills.

Encourage learners to:

- notice how speakers justify and defend opinions
- identify language used for disagreement, challenge and negotiation
- listen for how speakers develop arguments and respond to alternative viewpoints
- reuse useful language and interaction patterns in discussion and role-play tasks.

After listening activities, give learners opportunities to:

- continue or extend the discussion
- respond from a different viewpoint
- debate or evaluate ideas from the recording
- role-play a related negotiation or problem-solving situation.

This helps learners develop listening, speaking and interaction skills together in more realistic and demanding communication contexts.

Level 2 Independent Listening – Practice Set

Task 3: Extract 1 – Monologue

Materials

- ▶ Extract 1 – Monologue: 'Downshifting'
- ▶ 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, viewpoint and key ideas

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Introduce the topic

Using **Appendix A: Monologue**, ask learners:

- How can people save money when shopping?
- Do people always buy the cheapest products? Why/why not?

Elicit ideas such as:

- cheaper brands
- quality
- habits
- value for money

Step 2: Explore comparison and choice

Ask learners:

- Why might someone change from an expensive product to a cheaper one?
- What problems could happen?

Elicit:

- save money
- no difference in quality
- worse quality
- taste or performance changes

Step 3: Predict the content

Tell learners the recording is part of a programme discussing shopping habits. Ask learners what kinds of information or opinions they might hear.

Elicit ideas such as:

- advice
- comparisons
- examples
- opinions about products

Step 4: Set the context

Explain that learners will hear part of a programme explaining a shopping practice and discussing how people make decisions about products.

Activity 3.2: Gist (Question 1)

Aim: Identify overall purpose and focus of a monologue

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: First listening

Play the recording once. Ask learners what the point of the programme is.

Monologue

This week on Money Talk, we're investigating a practice called downshifting. To do this, try to think of the range of products at a supermarket as steps on a ladder. On the top rung, you have the most expensive, so-called 'premium brands', with a touch of luxury to the packaging and higher quality ingredients. Then you have the regular brands from manufacturers such as Kellogg's, Kraft, Kleenex and so on. The supermarket's own brands are a bit cheaper than manufacturer's brands; and many supermarkets also have a still-cheaper budget range.

'Downshifting' refers to the practice of choosing the next cheapest rung on the ladder than the one you habitually go for. For example, if you usually buy the supermarket's own brand potatoes, you could try the 'budget' range. If you can't tell the difference, then move to the lower brand. Studies have shown that families can save thousands of pounds over the course of a year by 'downshifting' like this.

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

Step 2: Check understanding

Elicit correct answer(s):

- to explain/introduce/talk about downshifting
- a strategy to make shopping cheaper

Acceptable partial answer(s):

- to help you shop more cheaply

Step 3: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what information helped them identify the purpose.

Elicit:

- investigating downshifting
- choosing cheaper products
- saving money
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for gist at Level 2, learners need to focus on the speaker's overall purpose and viewpoint across the whole recording, not just individual details.

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: *'What is the name of the cheapest range?'*

Ask learners to underline the key words:

- name
- cheapest range

Ask learners what kind of information they are listening for.

Elicit:

- a product range
- a type of supermarket brand

Step 2: Second listening

Play the recording again. Learners write their answers.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- the budget range
- budget range

Accept partial answer(s):

- own brand
- second cheapest

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them identify the answer.

Elicit:

- still-cheaper budget range
- budget
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for detail at Level 2, learners need to listen selectively for relevant supporting information within a longer explanation and distinguish it from other similar information.

Activity 3.4: Evaluation (Question 3)

Aim: Identify and interpret evaluation or judgement within a spoken explanation

Time: 6-8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'What judgement do you need to make after a downshift?'

Ask learners:

- What does the speaker want people to decide?
- What happens after you try a cheaper product?

Step 2: Third listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- the result of trying a cheaper product
- what decision the speaker suggests making.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- whether you can tell the difference
- whether the cheaper product is good enough
- whether the downshift is worthwhile

Accept partial answer(s):

- whether you like the new brand

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what words helped them answer the question.

Elicit:

- if you can't tell the difference
- move to the lower brand
- worthwhile
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for evaluation at Level 2, learners need to identify how the speaker judges or evaluates information and understand what conclusion or decision the listener is expected to make.

Activity 3.5: Inference (Question 4)

Aim: Interpret implied meaning and understand why a comparison or example is used

Time: 7-9 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'Why does the presenter talk about a 'ladder'?'

Ask learners:

- Is the speaker really talking about a ladder?
- Why might someone use a comparison like this?

Explain that this is an inference question. Learners need to think about what the comparison helps the listener understand.

Step 2: Final listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- the different product levels
- how the ladder helps explain the idea.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- to understand the pricing of supermarket goods
- to explain different price levels at supermarkets
- to explain the different ranges of products at supermarkets

Accept partial answer(s):

- different levels of products
- because some products are more expensive than others

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what information helped them infer the meaning.

Elicit:

- top rung
- most expensive
- cheaper
- next cheapest rung
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for inference at Level 2, learners need to understand why speakers use examples, comparisons or images and how these help explain a wider idea or viewpoint.

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:

- budget
- the budget range

Ask learners which answer is better and why.

Elicit:

- it is more complete
- it matches the recording more precisely

Explain that full answers at Level 2 should be accurate, precise and sufficiently developed.

Step 2: Improve answers

Write on the board: '*cheaper products*'. Ask learners:

- Why is this answer too general?
- What important idea is missing?

Elicit:

- it does not explain the 'ladder' idea
- it does not show the order from expensive to cheap
- it does not explain different levels or ranges

Ask learners to improve the answer.

Expected:

- products organised from expensive to cheap
- products on different levels of a ladder
- products at different price levels

Explain that at Level 2, learners often need to explain the relationship between ideas, not just identify one key word.

Step 3: Focus on precision

Write on the board: 'if it is good'.

Ask learners:

- What does 'good' mean here?
- How can we answer using the speaker's actual idea?

Elicit:

- whether you can tell the difference
- whether the cheaper product is worthwhile
- whether the cheaper product is good enough to buy again

Ask learners which answer is strongest and why.

Explain that stronger Level 2 answers:

- use precise meaning from the recording
- include the speaker's judgement or evaluation
- avoid vague language such as 'good' or 'better' where possible.

Step 4: Practice

Give learners short or incomplete answers:

- budget
- cheaper brands
- save money
- different products

Learners work in pairs to improve them into fuller Level 2 answers.

Possible responses:

- the budget range
- moving from expensive brands to cheaper brands
- families can save money by downshifting
- products organised at different price levels

After feedback, ask learners:

- Which answers are too vague?
- Which answers explain the idea clearly?
- Which answers use more precise language from the recording?

Step 5: Key message

Explain that at Level 2, full answers often require precise wording, supporting detail and a clear explanation of ideas or judgement.

Activity 3.7: Real-life extension (discussion)

Aim: Apply listening to real-life decision-making and discussion

Time: 8-10 minutes

Interaction: pairs → small groups

Step 1: Link to the listening

Ask learners:

- What is downshifting?
- Why do people do it?

Step 2: Give a similar situation

Tell learners they want to save money on shopping, but they are unsure whether cheaper products are worth buying. Ask learners:

- Which products would you downshift?
- Which products would you not change? Why?

Step 3: Pair discussion

Learners discuss their ideas in pairs. Encourage learners to:

- explain opinions
- compare experiences
- justify decisions.

Provide prompts if needed, such as:

- I would change... because...
- I don't think I would buy... because...
- In my opinion...

Step 4: Add variation

Introduce a change:

- the cheaper product is less environmentally friendly
- the expensive product tastes better
- the budget product saves a lot of money

Learners discuss again and decide what is most important.

Step 5: Feedback and reflection

Elicit ideas from the class. Highlight:

- evaluation and decision-making
- comparing viewpoints
- explaining and justifying opinions.

Explain that in real life, learners often need to evaluate information, compare options and make decisions based on different priorities such as cost, quality or environmental impact.

Task 3: Extract 2 – Dialogue

Materials

- ▶ Extract 2 – Dialogue: 'Downshifting'
- ▶ 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, viewpoints and possible differences of opinion

Time: 5-7 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Introduce the topic

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

- Do you ever buy cheaper supermarket products?
- Are cheaper products always worse? Why/Why not?

Elicit ideas such as:

- save money
- sometimes no difference
- quality changes
- taste or performance

Step 2: Explore viewpoints

Ask learners:

- What products would you never buy cheaply?
- Are there situations where expensive products are better?

Encourage learners to explain reasons and compare opinions.

Step 3: Predict the discussion

Tell learners the recording is a discussion about 'downshifting'. Ask:

- What experiences or opinions might the speakers discuss?
- Could the speakers agree on everything? Why/Why not?

Elicit ideas such as:

- food quality
- saving money
- environmental concerns
- different priorities

Step 4: Set the context

Explain that learners will hear two people discussing their experiences of changing shopping habits and evaluating whether cheaper or more expensive products are worthwhile.

Activity 3.9: Gist (Question 5)

Aim: Identify the overall topic and focus of a discussion

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: *Has anybody had any noteworthy experiences to share about 'downshifting'? Nicole?*

Woman: *Yes, Jamal. Recently, I was treating my folks to a spaghetti Bolognese but was on a tight budget so selected all the cheapest items I could.*

Man: *So you downshifted for a day. What was your verdict – or your parents'?*

Woman: *I would say the outcome was rather mixed. The vegetables were passable, but the pasta was a culinary disaster! It wasn't as firm when cooked, just really sort of mushy and lacking in taste. I won't buy it again.*

Man: *Well, that is precisely the point of the experiment. You try something out and judge whether the downshift has been worthwhile.*

Woman: *But, conversely, might you shift upwards sometimes?*

Man: *Of course! Recently I decided to 'upshift' my cleaning brands, selecting those that are the most environmentally responsible.*

Woman: *Well, I do appreciate saving money, but we should also consider the environment – and our taste buds, too.*

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):

- examples of downshifting (and upshifting)

Accept partial answer(s):

- changing shopping habits
- shopping habits

Step 3: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what information helped them identify the topic.

Elicit:

- downshifting
- cheapest items
- upshift
- environmentally responsible
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for gist at Level 2, learners need to follow the overall direction of the discussion and combine information from both speakers to understand the full topic.

Activity 3.10: Complex detail (Question 6)

Aim: Understand detailed explanation and connect supporting information

Time: 6-8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'What exactly was wrong with the woman's pasta?'

Ask learners to underline the key words:

- exactly
- wrong
- pasta

Ask learners if they are listening for a general opinion or precise detail. Elicit:

- precise detail
- explanation

Step 2: Second listening

Play the recording again. Learners write their answers.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- it was mushy and tasteless
- it was not firm and lacked taste

Accept partial answer(s):

- it tasted awful
- bad pasta

Step 4: Build exam awareness

Ask learners:

- Why is 'it tasted awful' not the strongest answer?
- What important detail is missing?

Elicit:

- the specific problem
- texture and taste
- exact description

Explain that at Level 2, full answers often require precise supporting detail, not only a general judgement.

Step 5: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what language helped them identify the detailed problem. Elicit:

- mushy
- lacking in taste
- not firm
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for complex detail, learners need to identify the exact explanation or description and distinguish it from more general opinion language.

Activity 3.11: Evaluation (Question 7)

Aim: Compare viewpoints and identify evaluation across speakers

Time: 6-8 minutes

Interaction: pairs

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'What have the man and woman been doing differently?'

Ask learners:

- Are the speakers behaving in the same way?
- What different choices are they making?

Step 2: Third listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- differences between the speakers
- how each speaker evaluates products.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- she has been downshifting and he has been upshifting

Accept partial answer(s):

- she has been downshifting
- he has been upshifting

Step 4: Build interpretation

Ask learners:

- Why does the man upshift his cleaning products?
- Why does the woman downshift food?

Elicit:

- environment
- saving money

Explain that evaluation questions at Level 2 often require learners to compare viewpoints, priorities or decisions across speakers.

Step 5: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what information helped them compare the speakers. Elicit:

- cheapest items
- environmentally responsible
- save money

Explain that learners need to track how each speaker evaluates situations differently and connect this to the wider discussion.

Activity 3.12: Inference (Question 8)

Aim: Interpret implied priorities and viewpoints

Time: 7-9 minutes

Interaction: pairs → whole class

Step 1: Focus on the question

Write the question on the board: 'What is important to the woman?'

Ask learners:

- Does the woman directly list her priorities?
- How can we understand what matters to her?

Explain that this is an inference question. Learners need to interpret her viewpoint from her comments and reactions.

Step 2: Final listening

Ask learners to listen for:

- the woman's opinions
- what she values or cares about.

Play the recording again.

Step 3: Check answers

Elicit correct answer(s):

- saving money is important, but so are the environment and taste
- she cares about cost, the environment and food quality

Accept partial answer(s):

- the environment
- saving money
- taste

Step 4: Listening strategy focus

Ask learners what clues helped them infer the answer.

Elicit:

- appreciate saving money
- consider the environment
- taste buds
- others (be sure to elicit all words to identify possible misunderstanding as well)

Explain that for inference at Level 2, learners need to combine several comments and viewpoints to understand what a speaker values or implies, even when it is not stated directly.

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:

- taste
- saving money is important, but so are the environment and taste

Ask learners which answer would receive full marks. Why?

Elicit:

- it includes more than one idea
- it explains the woman's priorities more fully
- it reflects the whole discussion

Step 2: Focus on precision and completeness

Write on the board: 'bad pasta'. Ask learners:

- Why is this too general?
- What exact detail is missing?

Elicit:

- mushy
- lacking taste
- not firm

Explain that at Level 2, learners often need to include precise descriptive detail, not only general opinion words.

Step 3: Improve answers

Give learners short answers such as:

- save money
- cheaper products
- environmental brands

Ask learners to improve them into fuller answers connected to the discussion. Possible responses:

- she wants to save money by buying cheaper products
- he upshifted to environmentally responsible brands

Step 4: Practice

Give learners several partial answers from the dialogue.

Learners work in pairs to:

- identify missing information
- improve precision
- explain why one answer is stronger than another.

Step 5: Key message

Explain that at Level 2, strong answers often:

- combine more than one idea
- include precise supporting detail
- reflect viewpoint, comparison or evaluation clearly.

Activity 3.14: Real-life extension (discussion)

Aim: Apply listening to real-life evaluation and decision-making

Time: 8-10 minutes

Interaction: pairs → small groups

Step 1: Link to the listening

Ask learners:

- Why do people downshift or upshift products?
- What factors influence their decisions?

Step 2: Give a similar situation

Tell learners they need to choose between:

- cheaper products
- environmentally friendly products
- higher quality products.

Ask which is most important to them and why.

Step 3: Pair discussion

Learners discuss their opinions in pairs. Encourage learners to:

- justify opinions
- compare priorities
- respond to different viewpoints.

Provide prompts if needed, such as:

- *In my opinion...*
- *I would prefer... because...*
- *That may be true, but...*

Step 4: Add variation (flexibility)

Introduce a change:

- the environmentally friendly product is expensive
- the cheap product tastes worse
- the premium product lasts longer

Learners discuss again and reconsider their decisions.

Step 5: Feedback and reflection

Elicit ideas from the class. Highlight:

- comparison and evaluation
- justification of opinions
- responding to alternative viewpoints.

Explain that in real life, learners often need to balance different priorities, evaluate options and justify decisions in workplace, social and everyday situations.

Appendix A: Monologue | Activities 3.1-3.7

1. Discuss these questions with a partner:
 - Why do people choose cheaper products?
 - Are expensive products always better?
 - What factors influence people's shopping decisions?

What do you think the recording will be about?

2. First listening – Gist

What is the point of this programme?

Listen for key ideas that show the speaker's overall purpose and viewpoint.

3. Second listening – Detail

What is the name of the cheapest range?

Listen for specific supporting information within the explanation.

4. Third listening – Evaluation

What judgement do you need to make after a downshift?

Listen for how the speaker evaluates products and what decision listeners are expected to make.

5. Final listening – Inference

Why does the presenter talk about a 'ladder'?

Listen for the comparison the speaker uses and think about what it helps explain.

6. Improve your answers

Make these answers better by adding more precise detail or explanation.

budget → _____

cheaper products → _____

7. Real-life link

Do you ever buy cheaper or more expensive versions of products? What influences your decision (for example, price, quality, environment, taste)?

Appendix B: Monologue | Model answers and transcript

Remind learners that full answers for the monologue questions:

- are precise and sufficiently developed (not just general words or phrases)
- include relevant supporting detail or explanation
- explain relationships between ideas, comparisons or viewpoints where needed
- reflect the speaker's meaning, judgement or evaluation clearly.

Question	Partial answer	Full answer
What is the point of this programme?	to help you shop more cheaply	to explain/introduce/talk about downshifting/a strategy to make shopping cheaper
What is the name of the cheapest range?	own brand (second cheapest)	budget/the budget range
What judgement do you need to make after a downshift?	whether you like the new brand	whether you can notice the difference between the old brand and the new
Why does the presenter talk about a 'ladder'?	because some products are more expensive than others	to explain the different ranges of products at supermarkets/it helps us to understand the pricing of supermarket goods

Transcript:

*This week on Money Talk, we're investigating a practice called **downshifting**. To do this, try to think of the range of products at a supermarket as **steps on a ladder**. On the top rung, you have the **most expensive, so-called 'premium brands'** with a touch of luxury to the packaging and higher quality ingredients. Then you have the regular brands from manufacturers such as Kellogg's, Kraft, Kleenex and so on. The supermarket's own brands are a bit cheaper than manufacturer's brands; and many supermarkets also have a **still-cheaper budget range**.*

'Downshifting' refers to the practice of choosing the next cheapest rung on the ladder than the one you habitually go for. For example, if you usually buy the supermarket's own brand potatoes, you could try the 'budget' range. If you can't tell the difference, then move to the lower brand. Studies have shown that families can save thousands of pounds over the course of a year by 'downshifting' like this.

Appendix C: Dialogue | Activities 3.8-3.14

1. Discuss these questions with a partner:

- Do you ever buy cheaper supermarket products? Why/Why not?
- Are expensive products always better?
- What things are important when people choose products (for example, price, quality, environment)?

What do you think the conversation will be about?

2. First listening – Gist

What are the man and woman talking about?

Listen for key ideas from both speakers that show the overall topic and focus of the discussion.

3. Second listening – Complex detail

What [exactly] was wrong with the woman's pasta?

Listen for precise descriptive detail and how the speaker explains the problem.

4. Third listening – Evaluation

What have the man and woman been doing differently?

Listen for how the speakers compare their choices, priorities or behaviour.

5. Final listening – Inference

What is important to the woman?

Listen to the woman's comments and reactions, then use them to understand what she values.

6. Improve your answers

Make these answers better by adding more precise detail or explanation.

bad pasta → _____

save money → _____

7. Real-life link

When you buy products, what is most important to you (for example, price, quality, environment, taste)? Why?

Appendix D: Dialogue | Model answers and transcript

Remind learners that full answers for the dialogue questions:

- include more than one connected idea or viewpoint
- include precise supporting detail, not just general opinion words
- compare or explain differences between speakers where needed
- use information from different parts of the conversation to support the answer.

Question	Partial answer	Full answer
What are the man and woman talking about?	examples of changing one's shopping habits	examples of downshifting (and upshifting)
What [exactly] was wrong with the woman's pasta?	it tasted awful/bad	(it tasted awful because) it was mushy and tasteless/it was not firm and lacked taste
What have the man and woman been doing differently?	she has been downshifting OR he has been upshifting	she has been downshifting and he has been upshifting
What is important to the woman?	the environment OR saving money OR taste	saving money is important, but so are the environment and taste

Transcript:

- Man: *Has anybody had any noteworthy experiences to share about 'downshifting'? Nicole?*
- Woman: *Yes, Jamal. Recently, I was treating my folks to a spaghetti Bolognese but was on a tight budget so selected all **the cheapest items I could**.*
- Man: *So you downshifted for a day. What was your verdict – or your parents'?*
- Woman: *I would say the outcome was rather mixed. The vegetables were passable, but **the pasta was a culinary disaster! It wasn't as firm** when cooked, just really sort of **mushy and lacking in taste**. I won't buy it again.*
- Man: *Well, that is precisely the point of the experiment. You try something out and judge whether the downshift has been worthwhile.*
- Woman: *But, conversely, might you **shift upwards** sometimes?*
- Man: *Of course! Recently I decided to '**upshift**' my cleaning brands, selecting those that are **the most environmentally responsible**.*
- Woman: *Well, I do appreciate **saving money**, but we should also **consider the environment – and our taste buds, too**.*