

MAKING LISTENING FUN

English language learners spend a lot of time listening, whether in classroom scenarios or the real world. Teachers know that being able to listen and comprehend content is a very important skill for students learning English. This skill is necessary not only to follow classroom instructions, but also to grasp important messages and information from what they hear.

In spite of the importance of listening skills, they can sometimes be neglected in the language classroom. Activities to isolate listening skills can be dry and boring. This week in the Teacher's Corner we will take a look at some easy ideas for making listening fun in the English language classroom.

ACTIVITY ONE: LISTEN AND BUZZ!

In this activity, students are divided into teams. Teams listen for specific information in a text, radio broadcast, or podcast and compete to be the first to buzz in and state the information correctly. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins!

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

GOAL

To improve students' listening skills by having them listen for specific information in a text, radio broadcast, or podcast.

MATERIALS

- Any text or passage you want students to learn from (Radio programs or podcasts can also be used.)
- One 'buzzer' for each team (This can be anything for students to use to create a noise that signals that they are ready to answer. Ideas include party noisemakers, drums, whistles, empty water

bottles filled with beans or pebbles, bicycle horns, or bells. Alternatively, students can also yell 'buzz' or another designated word, or even clap to signal they are ready to answer.)

PROCEDURE

1. Prepare for the activity by reading or listening to the text you plan to use. As you examine the text, make a list of key information you want students to listen for during the exercise and use it to write questions. The questions should be about the main information or facts you want students to learn from the text. Here are some suggested questions for different types of texts.

If students will listen to a biographical passage, use questions such as:

- Where was the person born?
- What is his/her birthdate?
- Where did he/she attend university?
- What are two major accomplishments of this person?
- Why was this person important in history?

If the text is fiction, ask:

- Who is the main character?
- Where does the story take place?
- What is the character's problem?
- How is the problem solved?

2. Explain the activity to students. Tell them that they will hear you read a passage (or hear a radio broadcast/podcast) and need to listen for specific information. Note that they will be divided into teams.

3. Give students the questions you have created so that they know what information you want them to find. These can be presented orally or written on the board. To challenge advanced students, present the questions in a random order, not as they will be heard when the text is read. For beginner students, the questions can be presented one at a time before reading the section of the text that contains the answer (perhaps one paragraph at a time).
4. Divide the class into equal teams using any method you prefer. The game works best if the number of questions is close to the number of members on each team. Teams can line up in designated areas of the classroom. Be sure there is some space between the teams so that you can tell who is buzzing in during the activity. Teams should have a name for scorekeeping purposes.
5. Once the teams are in place, distribute the buzzers (or noisy objects) and/or explain to students how you expect them to signal that they have heard an answer to one of the questions about the text.
6. Tell students that only the person in the front of the line may buzz in. Explain that you will call on the first person that buzzes in to provide a response. Once they have attempted, they pass the buzzer to the next person in line and go to the end. If their response is correct, all teams must send the student at the front of the line to the back of the line. If their response is incorrect, other teams have a chance to buzz in and answer the question. This works best if you say “Incorrect!” to signal that other teams may buzz in. Teams earn a point for each correct response.
7. Continue to read the text aloud or play the audio until all questions have been answered. If students were unable to answer some questions, read the text or play the audio again and give teams another chance to buzz in.
8. Close the activity by reviewing the answers to all of the questions with students.

ACTIVITY TWO: SECRET MESSAGE

During this game, students line up in teams and whisper a secret message down the line. Each student must listen carefully in order to recall, and be able to repeat, what they hear.

LEVEL

Beginner and above

GOAL

To improve students' listening skills by having them listen closely to pronunciation and recall phrases/sentences.

MATERIALS

- A notepad or single sheet of paper for each team
- Pencils or pens

PROCEDURE

1. Divide the class into two equal teams and have students of each team line up in a row. If the class is very large, you can form more than two teams.
2. Assign each team a name and write the names on the board for scorekeeping purposes. At the same time, label each of the notepads or sheets of paper with a team name.
3. Explain that the first member of each team will think of a sentence and secretly write it on the paper or pad for their team. They must be careful to do so in a way that does not allow the rest of the team to see it. If needed, you can ask that they come up to the front of the room to write down the sentence.
4. The first person from each team (the student who thought of the sentence) must whisper the phrase or sentence into the ear of the next person in line, in a way so no one else hears. Then, the second person whispers it to the third. This continues until the sentence reaches the last person in line.

5. When the last person hears the sentence, they must repeat it to the teacher, who will check to see if it matches the sentence written on the team's paper.
6. If the final member of the team repeats the sentence as it is written, the team earns two points. If it is nearly correct, the team earns one point. If it is very different from the original sentence, no points are earned.
7. Once the score has been recorded, the first person in line goes to the end of the line, and the activity is repeated with the next team member. Continue until all members of each team have had a chance to create a sentence. The team with the most points wins!

VARIATIONS

- For beginner students, one word or a short phrase can be used instead of a sentence. The speaker can also whisper the word/phrase to the teacher instead of writing it down if needed.
- With a little preparation, this game can be played with vocabulary words/sentences or key information you want students to review from a lesson. For example, if students have been learning about weather, you can ask them to form sentences with weather words and provide a list on the board. Words can be crossed off as they are used. If there is information you want students to review, you can prepare the sentences yourself and show/whisper them to the speaker to be passed down the line.