

How do we listen?

Look at the Listening unit exercise Why is it difficult to listen? in Study Skills Success. Try this as a discussion exercise with other students before completing it in the program and listening to feedback.



How difficult to you find it to listen to and completely understand the items below. Rank them in order of difficulty. Easiest = 1.

- ___ A lecture on nuclear fission in your language.
- ___ A conversation with an English speaking friend.
- ___ A railway station announcement in your language.
- ___ The song 'Happy Birthday' in English.
- ___ A TV program on your favourite subject in Russian.
- ___ A short talk on 'My favourite holiday' in English.
- ___ A conversation with a friend in your language.

When you have finished, think about these questions. Make notes and discuss your answers with your partner.

1. You probably find it easier to understand a talk on 'My favourite holiday' in English than a lecture on nuclear fission in your own language. How do you explain this?
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2. Do you find English difficult to understand because people speak too fast? Is it more difficult to understand 'Happy Birthday' in English if it is sung faster? Why not, and what does this tell you?
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3. What role does your cultural background play in understanding what people are saying? Can you give any examples of culture being a barrier to understanding?
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4. Why is it important in a listening exam to read the questions very carefully before you start listening?
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5. Other factors that make it easier on more difficult to understand include sound quality and your motivation for listening. Can you think of any others?
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