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Ben: Yeah, I'm surprised you experienced all three because normally, we have one tutor assigned to one student.

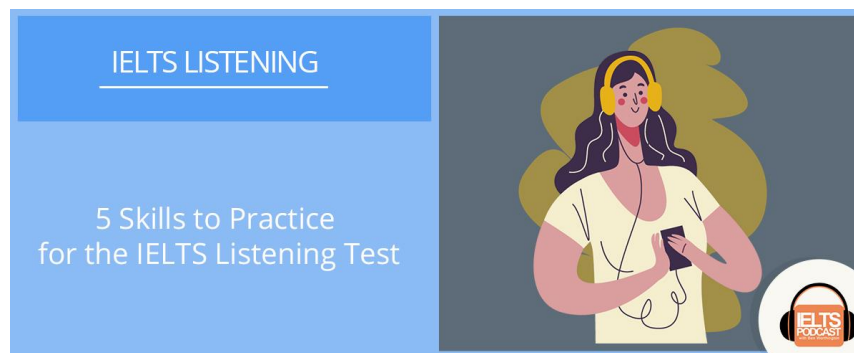**Student:** Because I bought too many packages.

Ben: And we couldn't keep up with your work so that's probably why.

Student: They are all very encouraging and they gave really good feedback so thank you to all of them.

Ben: Super. No, I'm glad to hear that it makes me very happy.

Ben: We are here to guide you through this test jungle. Enjoy these IELTS tutorials and if you need more help or want to access the famous online course, you can visit us at ieltspodcast.com.

Daphne: Welcome to this podcast from ieltspodcast.com. Today, we're going to be looking at the listening section of the paper and we're going to be looking at five ways to practice for your listening test.

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So, why is listening harder than it might seem? On first glance, the listening section of the IELTS paper seems to be the easiest and a lot of students score really high here. Well done. Great. But a lot of people find it much harder and this is because when you're doing listening, there's a lot of sub skills that are needed. It's not quite as simple as just listening and writing down your answers, not always.

The sub skills that you need for listening to authentic materials and your exam is basically an authentic material are schematic knowledge. So, this is factual socio-cultural knowledge of what is going on and the text is using real-world examples. So, if you have two students who are discussing the environment or pollution, instantly, your brain will be remembering everything you know about those two topics; the environmental or pollution and this background knowledge you have will help you quickly think of the vocabulary that you might hear. And these synonyms or knowledge of lots of different ways of saying the same thing will really, really help you. This is what we sometimes call top-down knowledge.

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Another top-down knowledge that you're working on is contextual knowledge. So, this is the context or the awareness of the co-text and inferring links and connections. So, you're predicting outcomes.

So, if the listening, for example, Section 2 or Section 3 is two students talking together about an assignment they need to be completing, you maybe as a student yourself will know the sort of questions that they will be asking each other. You'll know the word deadline. You'll know the word presentation. You'll know various other key clues that will help you find the answer. That's your knowledge of the context of two students talking together and what they might be chatting about.

Bottom up knowledge as we sometimes call it is systemic knowledge. So, this is more structural. This is more related to the grammar and the range of grammar that might be used. So, this is recognizing communicative functions, so the connecting words, the cohesive devices that we use in spoken discourse, the connected speech when we run our words together in English, and really

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important this is something we're going to look at today the functions of stress and how the stress and intonation makes a big difference to what you're hearing.

So, my name is Daphne. I'm one of the tutors here at ieltspodcast.com. Great to have you with me today. Thank you for tuning in and listening to this. I've been teaching IELTS for about seven years. I really love working with students on their listening practice because as I say, sometimes we think listening is easy, but actually for me, it's a lot more difficult than it looks especially in an exam context.

Remember in IELTS you only hear the listening once, so you have to be very tuned in all the time to finding the right answer and as we all know, concentrating for that long is also quite challenging. It certainly is for me sometimes.

So, the listening paper 30 minutes 40 questions. And as we said before, unlike reading or writing where you can read something again or you can edit your writing, you only get one go at the

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listening. So, any distraction or loss of focus can affect your score more than any other parts of the test.

Also, the questions get trickier with each section as do the recordings. And as each section passes, your answers might be less explicit. So, you're going to have to work harder to find the actual answer. Remember quite often students in the listening might be contradicting each other. They won't give you the exact answer. You're going to have to work really hard to find it and this is some of the skills we're going to look at today.

So, we're going to share with you now a bag of tricks or five tips if you like to help you really build those listening skills and things to work on when you're preparing for your exam. And I think you'll love the fifth one keep listening because this is certainly a situation which most of us have probably found ourselves in at some time or other.

So, the first thing we're going to listen for, the first skill we're going to work on is identifying key information. So, when you're listening to a conversation you may find yourself missing the

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important points the speakers are trying to convey and because you can't see people; you can't see their movements, you can't see their eyes, their faces, their hands, you have to recognize which information is important to them. This is why you have to look for signs of emphasis which people use when they rely on only their voice.

So, for example stress intonation, volume, and speed. So, for example now, I'm talking to you a little bit slower than I probably would in conversation because I know a lot of you are listening in different countries. English isn't your first language and obviously, it's important that you understand the information I'm trying to convey. So, there may be certain words or certain phrases that I stress because I think that's really important.

Let me give you an example. So, when I'm trying to pronounce certain words that I would think are really important, I might stress them like that, I might say them slightly louder, I might say them slightly slower and I'm trying to emphasize the important points. And this will really help you find your answers quickly.

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So, for example in any sentence, there may be many points of information and some of them will be stressed differently depending on where the answer is and depending on the most important thing to the speaker.

So, let me show you. This is an extract from a BBC News report. So, there's a train that was derailed or was delayed because of a mudslide. So immediately, you're activating your contextual knowledge. You're thinking of a train. You're thinking of a mudslide. This is when there's been a lot of rain and some of the land has collapsed onto the track. So, I'm picturing a train with lots of people on it. I'm picturing a mudslide and I know there's been a delay.

So, the report goes a packed Northwestern operated train was briefly held up by a mudslide on the track of the Penistone line leading to York on Tuesday afternoon. Now, I might know the actual locations, but it doesn't really matter if I don't. I can picture this train. So, depending on which information is vital to the BBC, so this would be the speaker or the narrator, different words can be stressed to give a different meaning. So listen to these examples.

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If we use more volume stress and pronounce the word Northwestern operated train more slowly than the rest of the sentence, we'd be emphasizing that the incident involves that particular company and not another company, for example in the south east.

Another example is that if we emphasize briefly, the train was briefly held up, then I'm emphasizing that luckily, the delay was a short one and the passengers continued their journey without any other problem.

Again, if I emphasize the word mudslide, we'd be pointing out that this was the reason for the delay and this could be then connected to a recent weather report. Maybe there had been very bad weather. There had been a lot of rain up there or that it might be very surprising. It was a mudslide. It wasn't anything else and we don't have many mudslides around here anyway.

So, it's really important that you tune in to where we are making the stress. English is a stress-timed language. We've talked about this before on some of our podcasts when we've looked at pronunciation. And being a stress-timed language in a way makes it easier because you

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can tell which words are important, but the other side of that is that it means that the less important words are joined together in connected speech making them a little bit harder to identify. So, learning to recognize such vital points in a conversation can really help you find your answer quickly.

What about detail listening? So, some IELTS recordings might be of a person describing a process that involves a great number of details. You might hear someone describing how to download and access an app or even someone giving directions to find a place. This is something I am really, really bad at. If someone gives me directions, I stop listening and I know I stop listening. So, I have to work really hard to focus on what they're saying.

An additional problem I'm going to share with you is that I'm really bad at remembering left and right. I'm left-handed that's my excuse for not knowing my left and right. So, if someone's giving me directions, I will stand there waving my hands in the air trying to remember visually

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physically which is left, which is right, which way they're telling me to go. Needless to say, I always get lost and I'm very grateful for Sat Nav or Google Maps which could usually help me.

So, in order to successfully complete your listening, you have to focus and listen to every detail or step of the process. So, you need to practice detailed listening. A good start for this could be to listen to quite a technical podcast or an audio recording and try and remember as much as you can.

Maybe try and find a podcast about something you're not familiar with. It's easy for us to tune in to podcasts that we are confident about the subject, we enjoy it, it's quite relaxing, but tune in to something you know nothing about which makes it much more of a challenge and then challenge yourself. Don't just listen, but listen in detail and actively listen so then after you've finished listening, tell your colleague at work or tell a friend what you listened to and what you learned.

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So by doing that, by knowing that you've got to tell somebody afterwards what you were listening to, you're going to work much harder. So, that's listening for detail. So, every detailed step of the process and the biggest problem here I think probably is concentration.

Predicting. So, as we said before when we're looking at the top-down elements and schematic knowledge, predicting is really important. The context of every recording is set in a context that we might be familiar with. So for example, in the Section 1 of the listening you might hear someone telling you where somebody lives or you might be gathering information about a timetable for a gym or a visit to a doctor's; something like that. We've done that most of us, so we know what kind of questions we're going to be asked. So, this idea of prediction is really important. We've got a lot of the knowledge there already. We're just checking it against what we're going to hear in the listening recording.

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So, knowing the context of the recording can help you to complete the exercise more successfully because you're predicting information based on your previous knowledge. This is the schematic knowledge.

For example, if your answer sheet is a doctor's prescription with some blank spaces in it, you can have a quick look at the answer sheet even though you don't know what the answers are going to be, but you will know that the doctor will ask maybe how to spell a patient's name and you might be writing details about what the problem is.

A prescription is the piece of paper that the doctor writes to you usually with the medicine on it and then in the UK anyway, you take that prescription to the pharmacy and then you can collect your medicine. If you've been in that situation before, for example, you're complaining about a sore throat, you will know what the treatment might be and you'll know the kind of questions the doctor might ask.

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So, if there's an empty space next to a drink beep: you could probably guess that that might be maybe tea or hot lemon and syrup something like that. It's a very simple example, but it proves that predicting can be a useful tool that you can help understand the recording more easily as well as remember the answers better when you hear them.

And actually talking about the doctor's prescription, it is really important if you have got a table or a gap completion in the listening. Look at it really carefully. When you have those valuable 30 seconds or whatever it is to examine that table, look at it really, really carefully and then you know what you're going to be listening for.

Target listening. So, this is number four in these things that we're practicing or these skills that we're going to be practicing for when we are preparing. We've looked at stress, remember? Identifying key information through stress patterns. We've looked at listening for detail, someone giving me directions and me trying really hard to concentrate. We've looked at predicting, so that's using the knowledge you already have to help you find the answer.

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Target listening is kind of mostly explained as listening for target information only similar to when you are reading and you're reading and you're just looking for one bit of information. You're not worried about what else is going on in that sentence. So, it's different from listening for the general idea, deciphering opinions, or trying to catch every detail. Target listening is asking for specific information without worrying about the rest of it.

So an example of target listening could be if your answer sheet requires you to find information on the effect of pollution on air quality and health. And when you listen to the recording, there'll be lots of distractions. There'll be lots of suggestions of other areas where there might be pollution.

The examiner will try and pull you or the text rather-- the listening will try and pull you in lots of different directions, but when you're listening, you're going to have to wait for a mention, for example, of toxic emissions so that might be the pollution and you pay no attention to the rest of the discussion which also might mention the impacts of pollution on living as well as health.

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So, you're going to look for mentions of toxic emissions and health or hospitalization or asthma or illness; anything connected to that idea of health and you're not going to worry too much about other aspects, for example, traffic jams. But you need to know when your answer is coming and that's the best way. So, listen for really specific detail.

An easier example to understand maybe is when you're waiting for a teacher to read the names of students who passed the test and we all remember this from school; that agonizing moment where the teacher is reading a list and you're really hoping your name is going to be on that list and you won't have to re-sit the test.

So, this is target listening when your teacher is reading out the names, you're waiting for yours. This is active listening. You're not worried about anybody else. You just want to know your test result.

Practicing target listening can help you save time and effort by sharpening your focus on specific pieces of information that are vital to you. So, while you keep practice in mind, that information

you're looking for might be phrased differently. Remember instead of air quality, the speaker might use the word pure air or clean air. So, when you're practicing fishing for information, keep that in mind.

Also, really help for students when we're thinking about synonyms because this is what this is, we've been very lucky. A very kind student who we worked with for a long time called Vinod from India wrote a list of synonyms for us. This was something he was obsessed with. We worked with him on his writing and he was very keen not to repeat vocabulary. So, he had a huge vocabulary which he worked really, really hard on learning.
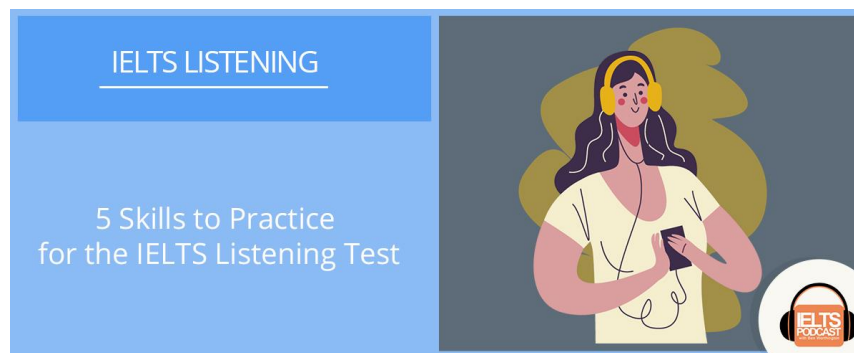
And the way he learned that vocabulary it was such a good tip. Every time he came across a word he used the thesaurus so like a dictionary to give him alternative words. And he built up a fabulous list of synonyms and he shared that with us. So, we have a great PDF from him all the synonyms he worked on during his IELTS preparation.

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So, if you sign up to the newsletter, you could access that PDF which will really, really help you build your vocabulary. It's hard building vocabulary. It's not as easy as it sounds, but one way that you can build vocabulary is to find a word that you're using and if you feel you're just about to repeat that word, look up that word in a dictionary.

Try and find a thesaurus which gives you alternative words. Make a note of it. Write them down. It's so important to write down the vocabulary and that will really help you, not only for writing where obviously showing a wide range of vocab is super important but also will help you in the listening that we're talking about here and of course the reading as well.

So, the final thing we were talking about and this is something I think you might find amusing is recognizing your speaker's attitude. So, when you're listening to recordings it's really important to listen to how they express their words. We talked about stress a little earlier. That's one way of doing it, but there's another element here because tone and emotion may add different meaning.

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So for example, imagine you're listening to a recording of a person who received a present and the present was a skateboard. So, a skateboard like roller skates are really popular now and there's a lot of people where I live who are skateboarding and they're extremely good at it.

So, to have an idea of how emotions and tone can add meaning, imagine the sentence what a great present being spoken by two different speakers. One is a boy with no interest in skateboarding because he's really into football and the other is a girl who's recently taken up the hobby. So, the boy might say in a slightly sarcastic way oh, what a great present when he really doesn't mean it whereas with the same words are spoken by the girl who is a skateboarder or wants to just start skateboarding she's going to be happy. What a great present!

And you can really hear whilst it's the same words there is a different implied meaning in that. So, the literal meaning that she's happy about it and the implied meaning the boy: no, that's absolutely not for me is really important.

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If you have a question on recognizing your speaker's attitude, that will really help you to practice that. Is the information they're saying true or is the information false because of the way they've said it.

So, we've looked in this podcast at a lot of different things. We've looked at the sub skills you need for reading, the schematic skills, the top-down skills, the context; what do you know about the situation these people are talking, and the systemic knowledge. So, this is the more technical, the grammar side, and then that covers the stress, the intonation, the cohesive devices, and of course the connected speech which is a bit tricky here.

So, I hope you found these five tips useful we've looked at in the reverse order. Recognizing your speaker's attitude. We've looked at target listening. We've looked at predicting what might come next. Detail listening and the first one we talked about with a train was stress and pronunciation. So that was identifying the key information. I really hope you found this useful.

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So, I hope you've enjoyed this. I'm Daphne. Thank you very much for listening to this podcast all about listening.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com