Lesson Plan Ideas: Skill Building Activities

Listen to the Conversation
**Task Introduction**

- Listen to the Conversation tasks assess test takers’ listening comprehension.
- Test takers are required to listen to a short recording of a conversation and then answer a question about what they have heard.
- These tasks test whether the listener has understood the overall meaning, the context and/or specific details of a short dialogue.
- The conversations are short. They will usually feature two speakers, with each person speaking once or twice.
- After the conversation ends, test takers will hear another voice asking a question about the conversation.
- Test takers must produce a short, spoken response to the question.
- The difficulty level varies in terms of sentence complexity and vocabulary level according to the level of the test.
- On screen, the task will look like this:

![Listen to the Conversation](image)

- Test takers can begin recording their response 1 second after the recording ends, once the Audio Status box says ‘Recording’.
- The microphone automatically closes and recording ends after 12 seconds.
- While test takers are recording their response, the progress bar will show how much time is left.
- Responses to the Listen to the Conversation questions usually only need to be one word or a few words.
Strategies for Success

✅ Listen carefully. The question might assess test takers’ understanding of a small detail in the conversation. It is important that they pay attention to every word on the recording.

✅ Take notes selectively. Test takers can use the notepad to make notes. As the conversation is short, they may not need to take notes, but it can help some test takers to make notes of key words they hear.

✅ Pay attention to context. Test takers should ask themselves ‘Where is this conversation happening?’ There will usually be some key words or phrases that can answer this question; e.g. if the conversation includes someone saying ‘How much does this cost?’ it is likely to be happening in a shop. If someone says ‘Could you pass me a menu?’ then it is likely that the conversation is taking place in a restaurant. The question could be something like ‘Where are the speakers?’ or ‘What is the woman’s job?’ so it is important for test takers to look for contextual clues.

✅ Speak at a normal volume. When answering the question, test takers should not speak too quietly, as this may mean that their voice is not recorded successfully. Speaking too loudly could lead to the recording being distorted, so it is important that test takers speak in a natural way.
Listen to the Conversation:  
Activities for all learners

The dialogues that feature in Listen to the Conversation tasks will vary in terms of vocabulary level and sentence complexity according to the level of the test. Test takers at lower levels are likely to be presented with conversations containing shorter, simpler sentences and common, everyday language, while higher-level test takers can expect to hear conversations containing longer sentences and more high-level vocabulary.

Learners of all levels will need to understand the requirements of the task and will need to practise listening to short dialogues. All learners should also be trying to build their vocabulary so that they are familiar with the words they hear on the recordings.

Understanding the task

After introducing the Listen to the Conversation task to your learners and explaining the Strategies for Success on page 1, check that they have understood by using the following multiple-choice Answer.

Multiple–Choice Answer

1) Listen to the Conversation tasks require test takers to ________ in response to a question.
   a) write  
   b) speak  
   c) write and speak

2) Questions ________ be about the location where the conversation has taken place.
   a) will  
   b) won’t  
   c) could

3) When responding to the question, test takers usually need to use ________
   a) one or a few words.  
   b) full sentences.  
   c) as many words as possible.

4) While listening to the conversation, it is a good idea for test takers to make notes ________
   a) selectively.  
   b) of every word they hear.  
   c) about their plans for after the test ends.

5) Test takers should speak ________ in order for their voice to be recorded properly.
   a) loudly  
   b) quietly  
   c) naturally

Answers: 1) b – speak. 2) c – could. 3) a – one or a few words. 4) a – selectively 5) c – naturally
Listen to the Conversation:
Activities for all learners

Role play -> Summary

Role play activities can help language learners to develop many important skills, such as speaking aloud, using vocabulary in context, and identifying how words are pronounced and stressed. They can also be used very effectively to help learners prepare for Listen to the Conversation tasks, which require test takers to listen to short dialogues. Give your class a scenario and roles, and divide them into pairs. Ask each pair to create a short role play of 3–6 sentences, first writing a script and then reading aloud with their partner to practise. These role plays do not need to be particularly interesting or funny (though they can be!). Explain to learners that the most important thing is that they write realistic dialogues with accurate sentences. Here are some example scenario and roles:

- Someone has forgotten to buy milk. Roles = two people who live together.
- Someone is injured. Roles = injured person & doctor.
- Someone has won an award = two friends.

After pairs of learners have written their dialogue and practised saying it with each other. They should perform it in front of other learners. This could be done by grouping up two pairs of learners, or by having each pair perform in front of the whole group. To get them ready for Listen to the Conversation tasks, it is important to ensure learners are listening actively when their classmates perform their role play. Set them the task of writing short summaries of each role play they hear. You can let them take notes as they listen and then set a time limit for the summary writing. Turning this into a competition with points or some kind of prize for the best summary can help ensure learners are listening to each other as actively as possible.
Listen to the Conversation: Activities for A1/A2

English users at the A1 level should be able to recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning familiar matters such as family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly. At A2, English users can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance, such as very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment. Listen to the Conversation tasks assess test takers’ ability to do this. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the A2 example image below and other practice tasks on page 4.

Audio_A2_115_1

Transcript

Male child: Mum, can I have potatoes with my chicken?

Female adult: Well, we’re all having rice tonight.

Male child: Oh, ok. That’s great!

Narrator: What will the boy have with his chicken?

Answer

Rice

This way

Listening comprehension develops best when learners have a very clear purpose for listening to something. It can also help to add movement that associates words with actions. ‘This way’ can involve learners moving a pen along a piece of graph paper, or moving an object (such as a counter or small figure) around a table, or – if you have enough space – themselves moving around a room or playground.

• Give your group a scenario, such as ‘helping a cat find its way back home’ or ‘hunting for treasure’.

• Set them a starting point.

• Then give them directions (e.g. if using graph paper ‘move ten boxes to the left, then five boxes up’ or if moving around a room ‘one step forward, and then two steps right’.)

• The aim is for all learners to end up in the same place ‘to find the treasure’ or ‘find the way back home’. To ensure they listen to your instructions, rather than just copy each other’s movement, it is best to ask them to keep their eyes closed until they get to the final place.

You can vary this activity by dividing the group into pairs. One member of each pair is giving directions, while the other has their eyes closed/wears a blindfold and tries to follow the directions. You can position an object on one side of the room/playground and ask pairs to race each other to it.
Listen to the Conversation:
Activities for A1/A2

Who, what, when, where, how?

In preparation for Listen to the Conversation tasks, you will need to ensure A1 and A2 learners understand all the question words. To get them comfortable using and receiving questions in a number of ways, including interview and gap-fill activities. One option is to present learners with a list of questions and answers with the question words missing, like this:

1. ________ is your best friend?   Maria
2. ________ do you go to bed?        9 o’clock
3. ________ kind of music do you like? Hip-hop
4. ________ do you get to school?   By bicycle

Then, ask learners to write in the correct question word. You may want to give lower-level learners a list of question words to match to the spaces.

As a follow-up to this kind of gap-fill activity, you can ask learners to use the questions they have completed to interview their partner or a group of classmates. Alternatively, higher-level learners might be able to go straight into an interview activity by creating their own questions.

Children’s TV

A good way to get A1 and A2 learners used to listening to spoken English is to play children’s TV shows for them. You will be able to find lots of suitable videos online. Learners at this level, including adult learners, should be able to enjoy following events in animated shows quite well. Pause episodes at regular intervals and ask them questions about what has happened. This will give them practice responding to questions in the way they will need to for Listen to the Conversation tasks. It will also provide an opportunity for you to check that they are following the show and to help them if there are parts they do not understand.
At B1/B2 levels, English speakers can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, and leisure. They can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear. B2 learners are able to understand extended speech provided the topic is reasonably familiar. They can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. Listen to the Conversation tasks assess test takers’ listening ability, focusing on comprehension of a dialogue. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the B1 example image below and other practice tasks on page 4.

---

**Listen to the Conversation:**

**Activities for B1/B2**

Listen to the Conversation:

**Audio_B2_115_1**

**Transcript**

Male teen: How come you weren’t at Lucy’s party on Saturday?
Female teen: I’d already promised to do a yoga class with my sister, unfortunately.
Male teen: Someone said you were doing revision. I thought that was highly unlikely!
Narrator: What did the girl do on Saturday?

**Answer**

(do a) yoga (class)*

*The bracketed words are acceptable but unnecessary. Simply saying ‘yoga’ is a sufficient response.

**Online videos**

Using online videos regularly in class is a good way to improve learners’ listening comprehension. Select videos according to the interests of your learners or to connect with topics you are covering in class. Keep in mind that the level of the language used in the video will need to closely match the level of your learners, which will often mean selecting simpler content, perhaps targeted at a younger audience. For example, using videos containing explanations of science for young children can be effective for improving the listening ability of older children and adults.

Get your learners ready for Listen to the Conversation tasks by pausing the videos regularly and asking questions about what they have watched. Pausing also provides you with an opportunity to check that they are following the video and to help them clarify any parts they do not understand.
Listen to the Conversation: Activities for B1/B2

Key word notes

B1 and B2 learners need to start developing their note-taking skills. Even though Listen to the Conversation tasks are quite short, it is useful for test takers to take notes of the key words they hear. This will help them to answer the questions correctly. Use the transcript of the task above to highlight to learners which words are key (and therefore useful to make note of) and which words they should not make note of.

Key words = weren't, Lucy’s party, Saturday, yoga class, sister, revision unlikely

Less important words that do not need to be noted = ‘How come you…’ ‘I’d already promised…’ ‘Someone said you were…’

Next, use the practice tasks on page 4 to give your learners practice making notes while listening to Listen to the Conversation tasks.

Gap fill

Get your learners actively listening to dialogues by creating gap fill activities using transcripts of online videos or podcasts. You will be able to find videos/podcasts with transcripts online easily, as many video/podcast platforms now provide them. Check they are accurate before using them in class though, as sometimes they may include errors.

Once you have a suitable video and transcript, replace a number of words with gaps and ask your learners to fill them in as they listen. Gapping key words can help particularly to get them focused on the meaning of what they hear, but you can also gap less important, unstressed words to ensure they are actively listening throughout a recording.

Here is an example of a gapped text using the Listen to the Conversation task above:

**Male teen:** How come you weren’t at Lucy’s **(i) party** on Saturday?

**Female teen:** I’d already **(ii) promised** to do a yoga class with my **(iii) sister**, unfortunately.

**Male teen:** Someone **(iv) said** you were doing revision. I thought that was **(iv) highly** unlikely!

*(Key: (i) party (ii) promised (iii) sister (iv) said (v) highly)*

You could create more gapped texts using the practice tasks on page 5. Play the dialogue first. Then check your learners have completed the gaps correctly. Then play the question for them to answer.
Listen to the Conversation:
Activities for C1/C2

At C1 level, learners can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. C2-level English users have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, even when delivered at fast native speed. Listen to the Conversation tasks assess test takers’ listening ability, focusing on comprehension of a dialogue. Use the two example tasks below and others on page 4 to help your learners prepare.

Transcript

Female adult: Wow, this shed is a complete mess! I’ll grab the lawn mower and get started.

Male adult: I’ll tidy it now. Once I’ve finished, I’ll trim the hedges too if you like.

Female adult: Thanks, that’ll be handy. And thanks for planting the tomatoes this morning too.

Narrator: What gardening task is the woman about to do?

Answer

mow the lawn/ cut the grass

Debates

At C1/C2 level, learners can get a lot of useful listening practice by listening to each other. This of course creates opportunities for speaking practice at the same time. Using debate topics is an effective way to stimulate discussion. Good topics include ‘social media anonymity’ ‘school uniform’ ‘universal basic income’ and local issues specific to where you teach. Depending on the needs and personalities of your learners, you can decide to designate sides of the debate before they begin talking (e.g. Student A is for school uniform, Student B is against) or you can let the debate flow more freely with each learner just expressing their own opinion.

To get your learners ready for Listen to the Conversation tasks, divide them into groups of three. Set a topic and a time limit, telling learners they must keep speaking until the time is up. Two learners debate the topic while the third listens and takes notes of the points they make. Once the time limit is reached, the learners who have been taking notes report back to the whole class about what was discussed. Then, repeat with a new topic and learners changing roles. Ensure everyone gets at least one opportunity to be the person listening and one to chance to take notes.
Listen to the Conversation:
Activities for C1/C2

Targeted listening

Getting learners to think about and write down study questions before listening is a good way to ensure they are listening actively and to develop their ability to seek and process specific information as they listen. Find a podcast or radio broadcast that is likely to interest your group. Tell your learners what the topic of the recording is and ask them to create two questions related to the topic before they listen.

Play the recording for two minutes, then ask learners if they have been able to answer their questions. If they have not yet, explain that they may be able to when you start playing it again. Continue playing the recording in 90-second to two-minute chunks, pausing regularly. When the recording is paused, ask learners to create new questions based on what they have heard. Encourage learners to take notes as they listen and to create questions that they think are likely to be answered in the recording.

Before doing this activity, it is wise to listen to the recording first to identify where the best places to pause will be.
Listen to the Conversation: Activities for C1/C2

Summary selection

Questions in Listen to the Conversation tasks will often target very specific pieces of information within the dialogue. Another way to do this and to give your students some reading practice at the same time as developing their listening comprehension skills is to present them with short summaries of something they have listened to – one correctly summarising what they have heard and another correctly summarising some of the recording but containing some inaccuracy too. For example, you could ask them to select between these two summaries of the practice task above.

Summary A

A man and woman are in a garden, where there is a messy shed. The woman is about to start mowing the lawn, while the man is going to trim the hedges. After doing that, he intends to tidy the shed and plant some tomatoes.

Summary B

A man and woman are in a garden, where there is a messy shed. The woman is about to start mowing the lawn, while the man is going to trim the hedges after tidying the shed. He has already planted some tomatoes earlier in the day.

(Key – Summary B is best. Summary A mentions the man’s tasks in the wrong order.)

You can do this summary selection activity in a number of different ways, including:

1. Ask learners to listen and take notes. Then present the summaries to choose from at the end of the recording.

2. Present learners with the summaries and ask them to compare the two for a few minutes. Ask them to identify the key differences between them and to work out what information they need to listen out for when you play the recording. Then, play the recording and ask which summary is correct at the end.

3. Present learners with the summaries and play the recording at the same time. Ask learners to read and listen at the same time.

If you do not have time to write two summaries, look online for a podcast or radio broadcast that already has one summary written about it. Then create a second option by copying the summary and just changing part of the information.
Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

A2

Audio_A2_115_3

Transcript
Male adult: Do you like tea or coffee for breakfast?
Female adult: I prefer to have juice in the morning.
Male adult: Oh, I like cold drinks, too!
Narrator: What does the woman prefer to drink in the morning?
Answer
Juice

Audio_A2_118_3

Transcript
Male adult: Did you enjoy your singing class yesterday?
Female adult: No, that’s tomorrow. Yesterday was my dance class!
Male adult: Oh, you’ve got a very busy week!
Narrator: What class will the woman do tomorrow?
Answer
(a) singing (class)*

*The bracketed words are acceptable but unnecessary. Simply saying ‘yoga’ is a sufficient response.
Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

A2

Audio_A2_115_6

Transcript
Female child: Dad, can you take me swimming today?
Male adult: Sorry, I can't. But your aunt can.
Female child: Can she? Great!
Narrator: Who can take the girl swimming?
Answer
Her aunt

Audio_A2_115_7

Transcript
Female adult: Did you go to the gym yesterday evening?
Male adult: I couldn’t. I was at the theatre.
Female adult: Oh. Come with me tonight, then.
NARRATOR: Where was the man yesterday evening?
Answer
(at the) theatre*
*The bracketed words are acceptable but unnecessary. Simply saying ‘yoga’ is a sufficient response.
### Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

**B1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio_B1_115_1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Transcript

Male adult: Could you pass the milk?

Female adult: It's run out, but there's some cream left.

Male adult: That'll be fine, thanks.

NARRATOR: What does the woman give to the man?

**Answer**

Cream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio_B1_115_2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Transcript

Female adult: D'you need help with anything?

Male adult: Could you give me a hand with the wardrobe over there?

Female adult: Sure – let’s take the drawers out before we carry it.

NARRATOR: What will the woman help the man carry?

**Answer**

Wardrobe
# Listen to the Conversation:

## Practice Tasks

### B1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio_B1_115_3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcript</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adult: Would you like another blanket on your bed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male adult: I’m fine with a sheet, thanks – I wouldn’t mind a pillow though.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adult: Not a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARRATOR: What does the man need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio_B1_115_4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcript</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adult: My fridge isn’t working because there’s no electricity in my flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male adult: Why? Did you forget to pay your electricity bill or something?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female adult: Yes, exactly, they cut off the power! Now my food’s gone bad!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARRATOR: What did the woman not pay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electricity bill/ electric bill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio_B1_115_5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcript</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male adult: Were you in pain at school today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female teen: No, I felt fine playing football. It started when I got home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male adult: Okay, it’s good you’ve come to see me. I’ll check your temperature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARRATOR: Where did the girl start feeling pain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at) home*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The bracketed words are acceptable but unnecessary. Simply saying ‘yoga’ is a sufficient response.
Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

B2

Audio_B2_115_2

Transcript
Female adult: The points you’ve made in the assignment are quite weak, unfortunately.
Male teen: If I’d included more potential solutions, would that have been more effective?
Female adult: Not really. The limited scientific evidence for your claims was the problem.
NARRATOR: What should the boy have put more of into his assignment?
Answer
(scientific) evidence (for his claims)

Audio_B2_115_3

Transcript
Female adult US: I’ve drilled the holes in the wall – have you screwed everything together?
Male adult US: Yes – the wood’s very thin. I’m not sure it’ll take much weight.
Female adult US: But it’ll be perfect to put a few books and ornaments on.
NARRATOR: What are the speakers making?
Answer
(a wooden book)shelf/bookcase
Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

B2

Audio_B2_115_4

Transcript
Male adult: Broadly speaking, I think the guests enjoyed the event, didn’t they?
Female adult US: Nobody complained about their accommodation, and the entertainment was a big hit.
Male adult: Such a pity about the catering being so disorganised, though, wasn’t it!
NARRATOR: What aspect of the event was the least successful?

Answer
food/catering

Audio_B2_115_5

Transcript
Male teen: Did those dog-training classes work with your puppy?
Female teen: He doesn’t chew the furniture anymore, but he still barks at strangers.
Male teen: Oh, that’s definitely a problem. My dog just eats too much!
NARRATOR: What has the woman’s puppy stopped doing?

Answer
chewing (the) furniture
## Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

### C1

#### Audio_C1_115_2

**Transcript**

Female teen: You’re looking glum, what’s up? And where’s your phone?

Male teen: It’s been confiscated until the end of the day! I was texting during class.

Female teen: Oh dear. Yes, they’re really strict about that at this school, aren’t they?

Narrator: Who has the boy’s phone?

**Answer**

the teacher/school

#### Audio_C1_115_3

**Transcript**

Female adult: How about this T-shirt? The patterns on the shoulders contrast well with the other colours.

Male adult: The V-neck one? No way! I do fancy the brand but it’s too baggy.

Female adult: But you’re only going to wear it at the gym or under a hoodie!

Narrator: What does the man dislike about the t-shirt?

**Answer**

it’s baggy/too big
Listen to the Conversation: Practice Tasks

C1

Audio_C1_115_4

Transcript
Female adult Australian: You look smart. Are you making a pitch today?
Male adult Australian: Yeah, I’m sure they’ll like the product. I just hope I can control my nerves.
Female adult Australian: Well, your business plan is solid, so they’ll be hard pushed to resist.
Narrator: What is the man going to do today?

Answer
make a pitch

Audio_C1_115_5

Transcript
Male adult: The band at your party were phenomenal! You always manage to find great entertainment.
Female adult: Oh, thanks. And thanks for recommending the catering company, by the way.
Male adult: No problem, I’ve used them several times and they’ve always come up with the goods.
Narrator: What did the man help the woman find?

Answer
catering/caterers
Be yourself in English.