

Give Them Something to Listen For

Make listening purposeful with one clear target before learners hear an explanation.

3 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a short explanation. Set a first-listen question for the main idea and a second-listen focus for a useful detail.

Teach it in four steps

1. State the listening purpose before speaking or playing the extract. Keep the first question visible.
2. Listen once for the main idea without requiring detailed transcription.
3. Pairs compare what they understood and identify one uncertainty.
4. Listen again for the detail that resolves it; then explain the idea in new words.

Science: evaporation

First-listen target: What change happens during evaporation? Second-listen target: Where does the change occur? Expected response: "Liquid changes to gas at the surface; it can happen below the boiling point."

Teacher: "On the first listen, find the change. On the second, check where it happens."

Check understanding

Ask learners to explain why a puddle can shrink on a cool day. Check the distinction between evaporation and boiling, not just recognition of the word surface.

Fade the support

Let learners generate their own second-listen question, then use fewer prompts with a new explanation.

Adapt it across subjects

Humanities: listen first for a speaker's position, then for one supporting reason.

Maths: listen first for the chosen method, then for why it suits the problem.

Adjust the language support

A1-A2 access: keep the subject goal; use visuals, a small word bank, pointing or drawing and partner rehearsal. Use a home language to establish meaning where helpful.

B1-B2 extension: ask for fuller explanations, precise subject vocabulary and qualifications. Reduce sentence openings when learners can organise the response independently.

These are starting points, not placement rules. Judge support from the learner's response to this task; proficiency can differ across skills.