



What is listening?

Listening and hearing aren't the same.

We hear all sorts of noises in the world around us, but we don't listen to them all.

There are things we don't want to listen to so we 'tune out' and don't usually notice them. For example, people who live near busy roads get used to the sound of traffic and don't hear it any more.

Listening is a form of communication and is an active process.

When you listen you must get **meaning** from what's being said before you can respond.

We listen for different reasons:

- Just for **pleasure**: music, birds singing, the crackling of a log fire.
- To take part in **conversation**: exchange news with family and friends, make arrangements.
- For **information**: the news or weather forecast on the television or radio, or announcements at a station or airport.
- For **instructions**: so that we know how to carry out a task or operate equipment at work.
- To **understand**: when someone is explaining what is happening, what we have to do, what someone feels - for example, when someone is upset.
- To **get the gist** of what's being said: we don't always need to hear and understand every word to get the sense of what someone's saying - although we might want to do this if we're listening to a story.

NOTE: Often you hear what you expect to hear, not what's actually said - particularly when you're under pressure or busy.