

LISTENING TIPS AND STRATEGIES

ECPE Listening Tips and Strategies

What does the ECPE Listening Section test?

The listening section of the ECPE tests your ability to understand spoken English in a variety of situations, including conversations and short talks. The listening skills included on the test fall into three main categories: **global** (understanding the text as a whole, identifying the writer's opinion and purpose, synthesizing ideas, etc.), **local** (understanding supporting details or vocabulary), and **inferential** (drawing conclusions, making predictions, etc.).

Successful candidates do more than simply understand individual words. They recognize main ideas, speaker attitudes, connections between ideas, and the purpose of information. At C2 level, you are expected to understand native-speed conversation and the subtleties of spoken language, such as intonation, and what the speaker is implying rather than stating.

The strategies presented below help build transferable skills that can be applied to all parts of the listening test, and will help you approach the listening section more effectively. However, these strategies are suggestions only, and you should find the approach that works best for you!

1 Predict the topic and identify the main idea.

Before Listening:

Before each listening item begins, you will have a few seconds to read the questions and answer choices. There are 12 seconds after each question for you to answer the question and read the next one. In Parts 2 and 3, you have 30 seconds to read the questions before the talk begins. Use the time wisely to mentally prepare for what you might hear. Underline key words in the question and answer choices; they provide clues for you to predict the topics and main ideas. Then, listen for words related to these key words.

Examples of questions that ask about the main topic of the conversation:

- *What are the speakers mainly discussing?*
- *What are the speakers mainly talking about?*
- *What is the conversation/talk mainly about?*

Ask yourself:

- *What **topic** does each answer choice suggest?*
- *What **kind of situation** might the speakers be in?*
- *What **type of information** should I listen for?*
- *What **words** might I hear that are related to the topic?*

While Listening:

Focus on which topic is discussed most. Listen for words related to the topic and the key words you underlined. Focus on the general subject, not on small details.

Usually, the correct answer is supported by several related words or ideas in the conversation.

TIP

Keep lists and learn vocabulary according to topic areas. This will help you recognize related vocabulary while listening.

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2 Pay attention to tone, attitude and stance.

In some listening questions, you are asked to identify how the speaker feels about something or whether they agree or disagree with something. Listen not only to **what** the speaker says, but also **how** it is said and the attitude it conveys.

The speaker's tone of voice can express attitudes such as:

- enthusiasm
- irritation
- sarcasm
- doubt
- certainty
- skepticism

For example, a speaker may say the words: "That was a great idea." But depending on the tone, this could express:

- sincerity
- annoyance
- sarcasm
- skepticism

Listening carefully to **intonation, emphasis, and rhythm** will help you recognize the speaker's true attitude.

TIP

Listen to both **what** is said and **how** it is said. The correct answer can be derived from both a **paraphrase** from the audio, as well as the **tone** of the speaker.

3 Listen for paraphrase, not exact words.

In the ECPE Listening Test, the correct answer is rarely stated using exactly the same words as in the audio.

Instead, the audio usually uses paraphrased phrases or synonyms.

Listen for synonyms or phrases that mean something similar to what you read in the answer choices rather than expecting to hear the same words used.

TIP

Keep lists and learn synonyms of words and phrases, this will vastly improve your ability to recognize paraphrased answer choices.

4 Listen for inference and implication.

Some listening questions require you to **draw a conclusion** based on what you hear, rather than simply identify information that is stated directly.

Examples of inferential questions include:

- *What can be inferred about the speaker?*
- *What does the man imply about ...?/ What is implied about...?*
- *What is the speaker going to do next?*

In these questions, the answer is not stated directly. Instead, you must combine clues from the conversation to determine the most logical conclusion. Sometimes, questions depend on **how a speaker evaluates something** rather than on factual information alone.

TIP

Answers often rely on understanding common expressions. Learn common expressions and how they are used.