Learning to Study in English

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Listening to lectures

**ACTIVITY 6.1**

When you listen to a talk or lecture, it is rarely necessary to understand every word that is said. Understanding the overall meaning is much more important. Try to avoid concentrating on the individual words themselves and think about the general meaning of the talk or a particular part of the talk.

Listen to a short talk about astrology and astronomy. Then read the following sentences. Which sentence below do you think is correct, according to the talk?

a. Astrology is the scientific study of the origins and growth of astronomy.

b. Astronomy does not differ in many important respects from astrology.

c. All the early astrologers were really astronomers, too.

d. Although a superstition, astrology has helped the development of astronomy.

**ACTIVITY 6.2**

While we listen, we naturally think about what we are going to hear next. We call this predicting. If you can’t predict, you will find listening difficult because you will have to concentrate very hard on every word you hear; if you can predict, you will not have to give so much attention to individual words. Consequently, you will be able to concentrate on the overall meaning.

Being able to predict depends on your knowledge of the language and your general knowledge of the subject.

You will hear a short talk consisting of nine incomplete sentences. Listen and at the same time look at the map of Britain. Write down a word or phrase which could complete each incomplete sentence.
When you have finished, compare the words you have written with another student. Then listen to the complete talk and see if you wrote something similar to the words used in the talk. Your words may not be exactly the same, but the meaning should be similar.

**ACTIVITY 6.3**

Prepare for the talk you are going to hear by reading the following dictionary definitions. After you have studied these definitions, try to guess what the talk will be about and discuss this with a partner. (Note that all these dictionary definitions have been taken from *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.)

- **bacteria** very small living things related to plants, some of which cause disease
- **microbe** a living thing that is so small that it cannot be seen without a microscope, and that may cause disease
- **organism** 1 a living being 2 a whole system made of specialised parts
- **waste** used, damaged, or unwanted matter
Now listen to a short talk about microbes. As soon as you have heard the talk, read the following sentences about the talk. All of them are true but only one gives the main point of the talk. Which?

a  Microbes are useful in all kinds of processes involving fermentation.
b  Microbes can be used to destroy waste matter and in this way reduce pollution.
c  Microbes can be used to produce methane and thus increase our supplies of domestic fuel.
d  Microbes are useful in helping us to grow more plants and in turn providing more food for animals.

**ACTIVITY 6.4**

Now listen to a short talk about noise in our lives. Then summarise the talk in one sentence.

**ACTIVITY 6.5**

Why do people laugh? Listen to the talk about humour. Then give three reasons why people laugh. Write a sentence for each reason.
To help you to remember, an example of each reason is given below in the order in which it occurs in the talk. Each example is given in note-form.

1. Anti-communist - not care what kind of communist!
2. Scotsmen - mean.
3. Man in suit falling into swimming-pool.

When you have written down a complete sentence for each of the three reasons why people laugh, compare what you have written with another student. Are your sentences the same?
**ACTIVITY 6.6**

Task 1
You will hear five short descriptions. Match them to the items below:

- watch
- ball-point pen
- coin
- stamp
- paper clip

Task 2
You will now hear five more descriptions. This time you must guess what is being described.

Task 3
Work in pairs. Think of three objects and make brief notes about them. Then describe each one in turn to your partner, but don’t give the name of the object. Your partner must guess what you are describing.

**ACTIVITY 6.7**

Another way of preparing to listen to a lecture is to think of the vocabulary related to the topic.

Task 1
In the talk you are going to hear, the following words occur. Look up any that you do not know in a dictionary. What do you think is the subject of the talk?

- cane
- cattle
- crop
- rice
- staple
- yield

Task 2
Classify the words below next to the appropriate headings in the table which follows. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- arable
- ranch
- vegetables
- pastoral
- fish farm
- barley
- sugar
- selective breeding
- fertiliser
- olives
- factory farm
- cereals

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<td>Types of agriculture</td>
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Task 3
Listen to the talk and write down the words which are needed to complete the ten numbered spaces in the following notes.

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Task 1
The short lecture you are going to hear is about vocabulary and vocabulary learning. Before you listen to it, answer the following questions, and then compare your answers with another student.

1 How many words do you know in your own language?
2 How many words do you know in English?
3 How fast do children learn words in their mother tongue?
4 Can you think of a way to calculate roughly the size of your vocabulary (in your mother tongue or in English)?

Task 2
Listen to the lecture and answer the following questions:

1 How many words does the average person know?
2 How fast do children learn words?
3 How can you calculate the size of your vocabulary?

Task 3
Calculate the size of your vocabulary, using the method suggested in the lecture.
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Usually the most important point of something you hear will depend on the context of the entire talk or lecture. Thus, the broader context can determine which of the points made in part of it will be the most important.

Listen to three talks containing similar information but using it for different purposes. Choose the best title for each talk from the three below.

a. Better ways of studying
b. The importance of suitable lighting in a room
c. A major cause of headaches