

Transcript in English

Video: 5 Tips to Improve Listening Comprehension

Tip 1: Study Reductions

So the first trick to improving your listening skills is to **study reductions**. How is it that Americans speak so quickly? They reduce less important words. Let's take for example this word: **FOR**.

Fully pronounced, it's FOR. But most of the time, in a sentence, Americans pronounce it 'fer'. Really fast, with a reduced vowel, fer.

So if you're expecting to hear FOR, fully pronounced and clear, then you're never going to hear 'fer'.

- This is **for** /fer/ the meeting on Monday.
- I'm going to be late **for** /fer/ class. Fer, fer.

There are quite a few very common words that, just like this, Americans regularly reduce. Knowing what they are, studying them, practicing them, will help you identify them in a fast speaking of native English speakers.

I've put together a playlist of videos that goes over these common words that reduce. I'll post that playlist at the end of this video.

Tip 2: Study Linking

The second trick to improving your listening skills is to study how Americans link words together.

American English is very smooth. AmericanEnglishisverysmooth.

Linking words together is another way that Americans are able to speak so quickly but still be clear. When you study linking and the ways Americans link words and sounds, it makes it easier to understand native speakers.

There are specific cases and rules. For example, when you're linking a word that ends in the "I" vowel, a very common ending sound in American English, to a word that begins with a vowel, it helps to put a "Y" sound in between the words. Americans do this without thinking about it.

- "He always". Heeeeeyal-ya-ya-yyalways.
- It sounds like 'yalways'. He yalways. He always.

The Y is a glide consonant, so we can use it to smoothly glide between words.

I have a playlist of videos that goes over the cases and rules for linking which I'll put at the end of this video. Studying this will make Americans easier to understand, and make your English more beautifully American.

Tip 3: Study Native Speech

The third trick to improving your listening skills is to study the specifics of native speech. Great. Everyone wants to do that. HOW do you do that? I've come up with an exercise to study native speech that I call a 'Ben Franklin' exercise.

In these videos, I take a small segment of natural, conversational, native speech, and analyze every bit of it. We look at intonation, stress, words that reduce, linking.

This set of Ben Franklin videos does it all for you, so you can understand HOW to study the audio and video clips of native speakers, and how to get the most out of your studies.

Let's look at a quick example:

- Woman: Tom what did you do today?

Tom what did you do today? Lots of interesting things happening here. I noticed first of all that I've dropped the "T" here.

- Whaddid, whaddid... What did you do?

I'm also noticing I'm getting more of a J sound here.

- Ju, ju, what didju, didju...

So the D and the Y here are combining to make the J sound so we have

- Wha - di - ju... Whadidju, whadidju, whadidju. Tom what did you do today?
- Woman: Tom what did you do today?
- Man: Today?
- Woman: Today.
- Man: Today, I woke up...

At the end of this video, I'm going to put a link to a playlist of these Ben Franklin exercises.

Tip 4: Write what you hear

Trick number four: Find a short audio or video clip of a native speaker that has a transcript. I'll give you ideas of where to find these at the end of the video.

- ✓ Before you look at the transcript, listen or watch, and try to write down the transcript.
- ✓ Keep it short, 10 or 20 seconds of video or audio.
- ✓ Listen several times and do your best to write down exactly what's being said.
- ✓ Then compare it with the transcript.
- ✓ What are the words and phrases that you missed?
- ✓ Listen again and try to figure out why you missed them:
 - Was the stress different than you thought?
 - Was one of the words reduced so much that you didn't hear it?
 - Was there a word you've never heard of before?

- ✓ When you figure out WHY you didn't understand it, it's going to help you next time.
- ✓ Keep track of those words and phrases you couldn't understand, and use them with tip five.

Tip 5: Try Youglish

Now this is really cool. The fifth trick for improving your listening skills is to listen to a variety of native speakers say the word or phrase that you have a hard time hearing or understanding.

There's a website called Youglish, where you can plug in a word or a phrase and hear hundreds of examples of native speakers using that word or phrase in conversational English.

Let me show you what I mean. Here, I'm on Youglish.com. Let's say I didn't understand the phrase "I want to do that" as "I wanna do that" when I was working on a podcast listening comprehension exercise.

I type it in, with quotes, and I select US here for American English. Now it loads a series of videos, all queued up to this phrase that I can listen to in a row.

Use this button to skip to the next example.

"It takes me like an hour and 15 minutes to get here, I wanna do that and..."

"You're gonna come and help me and you say no I don't really think I wanna do that..."

"See others doing it and say, wow! I wanna do that with my own..."

"You know, I wanna do that..."

"I wanna do that and give you a call..."

"And I wanna do that today..."

"I wanna do that, just tell me how to do that..."

"If I wanna do that, I need these key..."

"I remember thinking I wanna do that."

"I wanna do that..."

"I wanna do this, I wanna do that..."

"I wanna do it. Do I wanna do that or do I wanna..."

Wow, everyone said wanna. As you hear one example, pause it, and imitate it.

Listen to 10, 15, 20 different people say your problem word or phrase and spend some time saying it out loud yourself.

What do you notice? Is there a Stop T? Is there a reduction? The next time you hear it in conversation or a movie, you're going to understand it.

There you have it. My top five secrets, my top tricks for improving your listening comprehension.

Aren't you sort of excited to get working on one of these tricks right now?

I want to give you a couple of resources for number 4 – videos and audios with transcripts:

- ✓ I love TED talks. Visit ted.com for thousands of videos on varied and interesting topics with transcripts. And just choose a 10 or 20 second section of the video to work on.
- ✓ Also, lots of podcasts have their transcripts online. One of my favorite podcasts is "This American Life." Check it out.