





EFFECTIVE LISTENING

We can improve listening by working on big picture skills and detail skills. Big picture skills involve anticipating the words you are likely to hear in a particular situation. Being aware of the situation you are in will help you to understand what is said. Detail skills are connected to the sounds that make up words. [Download this PDF](#) to play the embedded sounds.

	What you need to know.....
1. Big picture skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a list of the key words connected to your subject. These might be the names of substances, concepts, theoretical approaches, people or anything that comes up again and again in your reading and lectures.• Spend a little time each week making sure that your list is up to date and that you are familiar with it. This will help you to focus on the new content that you encounter rather than having to revisit old ideas.• If you are going to a lecture, make sure you are not going in cold. Look at the topic of the lecture and ask yourself what you already know about it. Which words from your list do you think you are likely to encounter? What ideas do you think will be raised?• If you do encounter a word which is new to you, especially in a live lecture, try not to panic. Think about the context in which the word is being used. Think about the larger point that is being made. Understanding these may help you work out the word's meaning. If not, stay focused on the larger picture and check the individual word later.
2. Detail skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you have any trouble following spoken English, try to build up your detail skills. Knowing a few key things can make a big difference quite quickly. In spoken English, people join words together, word linking, or pronounce them in different ways at different times, weak forms.
• Detail skills: Weak forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familiarise yourself with the way native English speakers shorten words. Usually, they squash vowel sounds, especially in frequently used words.• Learn about the symbol \ominus, which represents this sound: 

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ə is frequently used in weak forms and can represent any vowel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "It's a long way to the shop. What will they buy us?" <div data-bbox="970 174 1137 286" style="text-align: center;">  </div> • Notice how the same ə sound is used for many different letters. Listen for this in spoken English, you will notice many speakers doing something similar. 												
<p>3. Word linking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to the different ways that English words run together when people say them. Speakers join the end of one word to the beginning of the next, which can change how they sound. 												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word linking: Consonant to vowel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a word ending in a consonant sound is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound, the consonant sound often moves over to the beginning of the next word. <table border="1" data-bbox="568 797 1442 902"> <tr> <td>written</td> <td>spoken</td> </tr> <tr> <td>It's a...</td> <td>It-sa...</td> </tr> </table>	written	spoken	It's a...	It-sa...								
written	spoken												
It's a...	It-sa...												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word linking: Vowel to vowel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a word ends in an a, e or i vowel sound and the next word begins with a vowel, a short y sound usually appears between the two words. <table border="1" data-bbox="568 981 1442 1137"> <tr> <td>written</td> <td>spoken</td> </tr> <tr> <td>see on</td> <td>see_yon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>the apple</td> <td>the_yapple</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a word ends in an o or u vowel sound and the next word begins with a vowel, a short w sound usually appears between the two words. <table border="1" data-bbox="568 1279 1442 1435"> <tr> <td>written</td> <td>spoken</td> </tr> <tr> <td>no eggs</td> <td>no_weggs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>to eat</td> <td>to_weat</td> </tr> </table>	written	spoken	see on	see_yon	the apple	the_yapple	written	spoken	no eggs	no_weggs	to eat	to_weat
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<p>Useful links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding ə http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/features/schwa/ • Word linking http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/features/connected.shtml • Weak forms http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/support-files/weak-forms-list.pdf 													