How to Improve Your Listening

1. **Listen all the time, every day:** Regular practice is necessary to improve your listening. Keep a listening log. Listen to podcasts, TV, news, radio (such as NPR) and/or recordings especially for English Learners (VOA, Randall’s ESL Listening Lab, etc.). Listen to people talking on public transportation and in stores or cafes. Learn the lyrics to your favorite songs that are sung in English.
2. **Be prepared** to listen by reading about the subject before the listening or lecture. This way you will have the topic and vocabulary in your head already, which will make it much easier to understand what the speaker is saying.
3. **Concentrate:** stay focused, and don’t get distracted. It’s easy get distracted by your own ideas and emotional reaction to what is being said. Concentrate on the speaker’s ideas only. Looking at the speaker’s eyes helps you stay alert and interested.
4. **Main ideas:** Listen for main ideas and important points. Learn how to recognize that the speaker is making an important point by:
5. Introducing points with phrases such as “The first point I want to make today...” or “My next point is...”
6. Pausing before the point
7. Giving examples
8. Repeating the point
9. Speaking more loudly or slowly
10. Writing it on the board
11. Using words like “significant,” “important,” or “most.”
12. **Note-taking**: Take notes using abbreviations, and outlines. Use arrows to show connections between ideas. You don’t need to write down everything that is said. Be flexible in your method of note-taking – you may want to draw an idea map with the main topic in the middle and the subtopics all around it, connected by lines.
13. **Review your notes:** Study them the same day, fill in missing or misspelled words, summarize the points at the bottom of the page, and write your thoughts and questions.