

First of all, relax. The more relaxed and confident you are, the more you enjoy your listening and reading, the better you will do.

Make sure you listen a lot to things happening around you, at least an hour a day, whenever you have the chance while doing other tasks. Do so in a relaxed manner. Choose content that interests you, and focus mostly on the meaning. Seek to learn about the subject matter of what you are listening to. The language improvement will largely take care of itself. Radio, TV, conversations are all forms of ideal listening opportunities.

However, there are some things you can do to make it even better.

1. Maintain your reading activities, whether it is material for which you have the audio or not. Reading is a powerful way to increase vocabulary. Besides, when we read in a foreign language, we usually subvocalize, in other words we make the sounds in our heads. This is going to help your listening skills.

2. If possible, try to find content that has matching audio and text so that you can look up words or phrases that you are missing. This is not necessary but helpful. However, don't limit yourself to this. You can't always find such material, so in your reading and listening use different sources, a newspaper article here, a podcast or interview there. Try to stay within a narrow range of topics which cover more or less the same vocabulary, in your case current events and politics.



3. When you find audio content that you like, where you are interested in the subject and like the voice, listen more than once to the same audio material. If you like the voice, the intonation and the rhythm of the language will penetrate your mind better. Others have found that this not only helps with pronunciation but also with comprehension.

4. Plan to tackle some longer content in an areas of interest to you. This could be an audio book on history or current events for which you have the text. You can then save the audio to your mp3 player or smart phone. Make sure you like the voice of the narrator and find the subject interesting.

People have found that interspersing short material with a longer book is powerful. It can help improve your overall ability, and going to the longer book regularly can be both enjoyable and helpful. The comfort of a familiar environment, as you grow accustomed to the voice and context,

will give you confidence and improves your overall listening skills. There is also a great sense of satisfaction when you complete the book. The feeling that you have climbed a mountain.



5. Wherever possible, while listening or reading for meaning, try to focus on a few phrases or terms that you have just discovered or noticed. This helps the brain retain these expressions and will improve your listening skills. It also ensures that you stay focused. Don't be afraid to say them over in your mind and out loud several times. If you are unsure what a phrase or sentence means, ask someone who might know. This helps with your understanding also.

6. When you are at an intermediate or higher level in a language, you need to speak a lot. If you have a tutor, get him or her to give you a document, with your mistakes and phrases that cause you trouble. Use this document as a form of practice also. You will then pay more attention to these words and phrases in your reading and listening. This makes your listening more focused and gives it more resonance, as you come across words and phrases that you once tried to use.

7. Most of all remain relaxed, focus on the enjoyment of listening, and be confident that you can improve your listening skills a great deal if you remain committed to practice.

Helps

The ABC radio has a wonderful archive of stories and news articles you could use to help you in your reading and listening. The site has Audio files for listening to as well as the transcripts of the stories.

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/stories/>