

Useful Websites for Strengthening English Listening and Conversational Skills

This handout is designed for students learning English as a non-native language. As your listening skills improve, you understand more. You can also transfer some of your knowledge about spoken English to written English—for example, use of prepositions, sentence structure, organization, etc. The information below directs you to websites where you can strengthen your listening skills.

Randall's Cyber Listening Lab

<http://www.esl-lab.com/>

This ESL/EFL multimedia site is designed to help English learners improve their listening comprehension through a variety of audio and video conversations, interviews, and news reports. The audio clips include idiomatic phrases in American English. Exercises are separated into easy, medium, and difficult levels.

As an example of how you might use this website, consider this piece on the “ABCs of Money Matters” (rated “Difficult”): <http://www.esl-lab.com/expense/expenserdl.htm>.

Read the pre-listening exercises, and then listen to the audio a few times. Afterwards, try the vocabulary activities and text completion quiz. Then, at the bottom of the quiz, open the quiz script. Put your mouse on any of the **bolded vocabulary words** in the quiz script and you will be able to read their definitions.

ELLLO (English Language Listening Lab Online)

<http://www.elllo.org/>

Like Randall's Cyber Listening Lab, ELLLO offers multimedia resources for improving English listening skills. The site includes interviews, news reports, songs, games, and “mixers” (surveys in which multiple speakers answer the same question); speakers are from all over the world, and demonstrate a variety of accents. Browse the site, or link directly to the following:

- Audio clips: <http://www.elllo.org/english/TakeTwo.htm>.
- Video clips: <http://www.elllo.org/english/video.htm>.
- Situational English for everyday life: <http://www.elllo.org/english/Situations.htm>.
- Interviews: <http://www.elllo.org/english/About/Interviews.htm>.
- News stories: <http://www.elllo.org/english/NewCenter.htm>.
- Short talks: <http://www.elllo.org/english/Points.htm>
- Songs: <http://www.elllo.org/english/Songs.htm>
- Podcasts: http://www.elllo.org/elllo.org/ELLLO_POD/ELLLO_POD.html

Try watching the video on fast food: <http://www.elllo.org/english/0901/V905-Food.htm>. On the upper right, you can choose Show Text or Hide Text. Try to answer the questions. When you're

done and want to try something new, look on the upper right. Click on the Lesson Page link to listen to a new conversation.

Breaking News English (current events/news stories)

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/>

This website offers pre-listening and listening comprehension exercises based on current news stories. From the main page, click on the news topic you are interested in. There you'll find a transcript of the article, along with extensive exercises and activities to test your understanding and to help you strengthen your vocabulary. To listen to the article, click on the "Listening" download link in the top left corner of the page. Note that the speaker for these listening exercises is usually British.

National Public Radio

<http://www.npr.org>

National Public Radio posts its broadcasts online, providing a wealth of opportunities to hear spoken English on a diverse variety of topics. As of May 2002, NPR began providing **free written transcripts** of their shows "Morning Edition," "All Things Considered," "Weekend Edition Saturday," "Weekend Edition Sunday," and "Talk of the Nation." Scroll down the homepage to find these particular shows listed in the left-side PROGRAMS menu, or simply listen to whatever strikes your fancy.

Academic lectures

http://uc.princeton.edu/main/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

The University Channel at Princeton offers access to public affairs lectures from around the world. You may choose to listen to a lecture or watch a video of it.

<http://mitworld.mit.edu/browse/>

This Massachusetts Institute of Technology website offers videos featuring MIT faculty and visiting speakers.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/audio.asp>

Browse the audio pages of TeachingAmericanHistory.org for recordings of lectures and discussions from past summer institutes for social studies teachers.

Open Culture (www.oculture.com)

The website "Open Culture" explores cultural and educational media (podcasts, videos, online courses, etc.) that are freely available on the web. The editor, Dan Colman, is the Director & Associate Dean of Stanford's Continuing Studies Program.

- Language lessons: http://www.oculture.com/2006/10/foreign_language.html
- News and information resources:
http://www.oculture.com/2006/10/news_informatio.html
- Academic lectures in many subjects:
<http://www.oculture.com/2007/07/freeonlinecourses.html>
- Music Podcasts (music, interviews, and narrations):
http://www.oculture.com/2006/10/music_podcast_collection_-_classical_jazz_and_rock.html