LingoLift

Teacher Guide

All Grades

The 8 Key Listening Comprehension Skills (and How to Teach Them)

When teachers write listening comprehension questions, they're usually aiming at eight skills. These line up with the Common Core speaking and listening standards and with the evidence statements behind Smarter Balanced listening items. Here's each one with a sample question you could ask after a short story.

Literal meaning, vocabulary, and main idea check that students followed what they heard. Inference, purpose, conclusions, reasoning, and evidence ask them to think about it.

Most listening lessons need a mix of both.



8 Key Listening Comprehension Skills

Skill	What it asks students to do	Sample question
Literal meaning	Recall facts and details stated outright	“What did the researchers find in the cave?”
Vocabulary in context	Work out a word’s meaning from how it’s used	“What does tenuous mean the way she uses it?”
Inference	Go beyond what the speaker says directly	“Why do you think the reporter asked that question twice?”
Main idea	Identify the central idea or gist	“What is this story mostly about?”
Purpose	Decide why the speaker is speaking	“Is he trying to inform us or persuade us?”
Conclusions	Put details together into a judgment	“Based on what you heard, will the town rebuild the bridge?”
Reasoning	Analyze how a claim is built	“What reasons does she give for her claim?”
Evidence	Find details that support (or don’t support) a claim	“Which detail best backs up his argument?”

How to Teach Them

Teaching listening comprehension is a lot like teaching reading comprehension: build background, give a purpose, support during, and do something with it after.

Before you press play on a LingoLift lesson, preview 3–5 key words. You can use pictures. Post one or two questions so students know what to listen for.

First listen: the gist
"What's this mostly about?" Students tell a partner in one sentence.

Second listen: details
Pause after key sentences for a cloze sentence, a quick note, or a partner check.

Third listen: language
Replay a sentence with a target word or a structure from your subject, like how a scientist states a cause. Have students borrow it.

After listening (5–10 minutes)
Talk, then write: one claim with one detail from what they heard.

A read-along transcript helps at first. Fade it as students get stronger, so they rely on their ears.

> **Tip:** Strong listeners also manage their own listening. Teach four quick moves: predict ("What will we hear?"), check ("Was I right?"), fix ("Where did I lose track? Replay it."), and reflect ("What helped me follow?")

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