

Listening at Higher

Listening in the exam is very similar to what you know from National 5. It is made up of two texts, and is worth **20%** of your overall result. The final exam will be in two parts, first a monologue, just one person talking about a subject, then a discussion between two people. The monologue is worth eight marks, and the final question will always be a multiple choice asking about the overall purpose of the text. The monologue will last up to two minutes. The dialogue is worth 12 marks, and all the answers you need will be in the answers the person being interviewed or asked questions is giving. The whole interview will last up to three minutes.

At Higher you hear only these two texts twice, with a minute gap in between each reading and a longer gap between the first and second texts. You can answer the questions at any time, although it is best not to try do so during the first reading. Before you start, read the questions carefully, to give you clues as to what you will be hearing, and to know what you have to listen for. You will be given one minute in which to do this.

Do try not to write anything down during the first reading, even if you think you know the answer: writing interferes with your listening! You may think you will forget what you have heard, but learn to trust your memory. You risk missing out important details, because you are distracted while writing. Use that first listening to make sure you hear everything, and to give you a guide for which bit you have to listen to extra carefully for details you are required to give in your answer. Put a question mark where you have to listen particularly carefully next time.

Make sure you know what you are listening for: there will be lots of information you don't need, which just acts as interference when you are listening. Focus on what is needed for the answer. That means reading the questions properly before you hear the recording, and as you are listening.

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You only have to keep your concentration solid for the few minutes the recording is playing, so make sure you do. Don't be distracted during the first listening by writing notes: just keep listening.

Here are some other steps to take which should help you do your best:

- when you are told to open your paper, do so and read the information at the start setting the scene
- draw a line down the centre of the page, and put your notes on the left of the page when it is time (you should transfer your final answers to the right of the line at the end, and score out your notes with a single line)
- read all the questions carefully, as this will prepare you for what the dialogue is about

If you are not sure of an answer, go ahead and guess, as what you guess will be a secret between the examiner and you! Try however to make it an intelligent guess: if what you have written looks daft to you, then it probably is: your answer should make sense.

If the answer asks for two things, just give two things! The examiner can only give you two marks for the things you write down, so writing more is a waste of your time. You do not need to answer in sentences, just to give the information asked for. Have a look at marking schemes to give you an idea of how much information is needed.

How can you improve your listening skills? The key is always practice. When you have completed a listening as a practice exam, listen to it again with the script in front of you. This helps you match what you are hearing with the written word which you are very likely to know. Doing this increases your ability to understand spoken language, develops your ear and is really good practice. Another thing to do is revisit

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a listening you have already done and try it again. It will help develop that all important ear.

You will find past listening papers and marking schemes on The SQA website. Most of these will be for the old Higher, but the kind of level of language and the sort of answer required will still be very similar. Go to www.sqa.org.uk, then select *qualifications* to find what you need.

Take the opportunity to hear Spanish spoken whenever you can. That might mean listening to music (you can always find the text for what you are listening to online), watching YouTube clips, or watching films in Spanish with their subtitles on, either in English, or, better, in Spanish. You don't have to watch a whole film at a time, just a bit to help develop your ear.

There are lots of websites which will let you test your listening skills, and the one which will be easiest for you to access will be the Scholar Higher Spanish site. Your teacher will give you your ID and password for this, if you do not know it.