

Attention and Listening // Self-Help Strategies

Some students struggle to control their attention and listening especially for tasks where they are required to 'listen and do' at the same time. Using these self-help strategies will help you to develop these skills:

- Make sure you sit somewhere in the classroom where you can see both the teacher and the board easily without having to turn around and are not distracted by other students.
- Try to keep your desk as free of clutter as possible.
- Tune yourself in at the beginning of the lesson by making sure you have all your equipment ready and start to reflect on what you covered last time.
- Good listening involves sitting still, looking at the person talking and thinking about what is being said. Every now and then check whether you are doing these things to help you listen well.
- Pay attention to any pictures/diagrams or key words the teacher displays. These will help you to focus on the key points.
- If you realise you have lost concentration or were not listening, ask for the question or point to be repeated.
- Sometimes it is difficult to listen because the speaker is talking too quietly, talking too quickly, looking around instead of at the listener, obscuring their mouth, fidgeting, using inappropriate vocabulary, or trying to talk over background noise. In these situations, it is OK to ask them to repeat what they have said. You can also, politely, explain why you could not hear them e.g. 'I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you because of the noise in the corridor.'
- Often, people are so concerned about what they are going to say next that they stop listening to the person talking. Listen to the whole question or point and give yourself time to think about it and plan your answer before putting up your hand.
- If you are asked to make notes while watching a DVD or listening to the teacher, listen to a section and write the key words/points in note form (you won't have time to use full sentences). Some people find it easier to write notes as a mind map.