

# LISTENING EXAM TIPS & ADVICE

## A What skills do I need?

You are expected to:

- 1 use your preparation time to read and understand the instruction and any questions/sentences on the paper.
- 2 listen to the tape carefully first time through.
- 3 write the correct letter for each answer clearly in the box.
- 4 listen to the tape a second time and check or fill in any missing answers.

## B Extra tips

- 1 Always look at any example answer you are given to see what you are expected to do.
- 2 Read the questions on the exam paper before you listen so that you get an idea about what you might hear – you will be given time to do this.
- 3 Read every answer through very carefully on multiple choice activities. Sometimes they might be very similar, like 1A and 1B here, so it's important that you don't confuse them and write down the wrong letter in the box.
- 4 Check all your answers when the tape is played for the second time – have you really written down the right answer?
- 5 Don't lose your way while you're listening and get left behind. If you don't know the answer, then don't stop, just miss the question out and carry on with the next ones. You can always come back to any missing answers on your second listening.

- 6 Never leave a tick box blank – always write an answer, as even a guess at the end might score a mark, whereas a blank box won't score anything.

## C Remember

- 1 If you change your mind about an answer on a second listening, cross out the wrong answer and write your changed answer clearly – you won't score marks if the examiner can't make out what you've written.
- 2 You can always scribble notes on the paper while you're listening and then write the letter in the box after the recording.
- 3 Work out a system of note-taking before you go into the exam. So, for instance, if you hear *un pullover vert*, you could just note *pull vert*. You can always go back to your notes and write them as proper answers after the tape has finished, if necessary.
- 4 If you have to answer questions on a passage in French or English, don't write full sentences as just single words or short phrase answers will probably do.
- 5 Look out for any questions which carry two or more marks (usually shown in brackets by the question) and make sure you give enough details in your answer to get full marks.
- 6 Listen out for the tone of the speaker's voice to help give you a clue as to meaning. He or she might sound happy, sad, angry or cross.

## Before the exam

- Build up your personal vocabulary by learning a small number of new words every day.
- Make sure you are familiar with the different types of task you may be asked to do, and the relevant 'rubric' or instruction in French, for example: choosing, filling in a grid or a form, matching, gap filling, putting things in order, making decisions and giving reasons.
- Ask your teacher for recordings to take home. Listen to them as many times as you want. You won't be allowed this luxury in the exams, but it will build up your confidence and train your ear. Listening to any French will also help attune your ear, even if you don't understand everything, for instance French radio (on MW or LW, or on the internet), French-speaking channels on satellite TV, or videos of French-speaking films.
- It is sometimes helpful to work on the transcript that goes with a recording. For example, if you study the transcript before you listen to the tape, it could help your confidence when you realise how much you understand.
- Practise not writing when the tape is playing, because it is hard to write and listen at the same time. Learn to trust your short term memory!
- If you are entered for higher tier, make sure you have the opportunity to listen to longer passages. These often require you to understand the feelings, opinions and attitudes of the speakers.
- Before you go into the exam ask your teacher to offer the class a 'warm up' listening session of about 20 minutes. If this is not possible, listen to a tape of your own.

## During the exam

- You must come to the exam with a clear idea of the strategies that will help you work well under pressure. Here are some suggestions.
- Before the tape starts have a close look at the question. Be clear as to exactly what is wanted. Should you be listening for precise pieces of information (for example, train arrival and departure times) or should you be listening to the whole passage in order to draw a conclusion (for example, name the girl who has the best relationship with her parents)?
- As you read the question you should try to predict the sort of information that may be in the passage. It will help focus your mind.
- Have a good look at the title of the question as well as any illustrations. They may give you some important clues as to what is coming.
- When the tape begins, don't panic! You are not expected to understand every word. If the passage is long or if people are speaking quickly, there is probably a lot of "redundant" language that you do not need. Be positive. Concentrate on what you **do** understand. Remember - the passage may be difficult but the questions may be easy.
- Use your knowledge of grammar. For example, it may be important to know whether someone is talking about the past or the future.
- Use your knowledge of France and French-speaking countries. For example, if you hear people mentioning the N7 and the D255 you should be aware that they are talking about roads.
- Don't just listen to the words. The tone of someone's voice may also be helpful in showing their mood. The intonation of someone's voice may tell you if they are making a statement or asking a question.
- If you have to write answers in French, be as clear as possible; but remember you will not be penalised for small mistakes.
- Now decide which strategies will work best for you and practise using them as much as you can between now and the day of the exam. The more you practise them, the more you are likely to remember to use them during the exam itself.