ESL Listening Activities You Read Aloud, with Answers (A1–C2, PDF)

Twelve listening activities, two for every CEFR level from A1 to C2, built to be read aloud by the teacher. No speakers, no audio files, no Wi-Fi. Student tasks are on the page; the scripts and answers sit behind a toggle online and on separate teacher's pages at the back of the printable.

A1

1. My Classroom · dictation

Task: Listen and write the five sentences. Your teacher reads each sentence three times.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Then check: does every sentence start with a capital letter and end with a full stop?

2. Ana's Family Photo · true/false and short answers

Task: Listen to Ana talk about a photo of her family. Answer the questions.

1. True or false? Ana's dad has a beard.
2. What colour is her mum's hair?
3. What is her mum's job?
4. How old is Leo?
5. True or false? Ana has short hair.

A2

3. A Voicemail from Laura · gap fill

Task: Listen to Laura's phone message to Sam. Write one word or a number in each gap.

1. The football match starts at half past _____.
2. Sam and Laura meet at the _____.
3. A return ticket costs £_____.
4. After the match they can eat pizza on _____ Street.
5. If there is a problem, Sam should call Laura's _____.

4. Making Pancakes · listen and order

Task: Listen to the instructions. Put the steps in the right order (1–7).

__ Turn the pancake over.
__ Put two cups of flour in a big bowl.
__ Heat a little oil in a pan.
__ Add lemon and sugar.
__ Add two eggs and a glass of milk.
__ Pour some of the mix into the pan.
__ Mix everything together.

B1

5. The Riverside Food Festival · radio announcement

Task: Listen to a local radio announcement. Answer the questions in a few words.

1. Where will the festival take place this year?
2. Why has it moved?
3. How much does an adult ticket cost if you buy it online before Thursday?
4. What is happening on Saturday morning?
5. Why are visitors asked to come by bus?

6. Planning the Weekend · conversation, multiple choice

Task: Listen to Jake and Priya planning a weekend trip. Choose the best answer, a, b or c.

1. What did Jake want to do at first?
   a) go camping b) visit the city c) stay at home
2. Why do they change their plan?
   a) It is too expensive. b) The weather will be bad. c) Priya is busy.
3. Why does Priya want to book the train today?
   a) It is cheaper. b) There are only a few seats. c) She has a discount card.
4. What will they do on Saturday evening?
   a) see a film b) go to a museum c) go to a concert
5. What will Jake bring?
   a) the tickets b) food for the journey c) a map

B2

7. From Accountant to Bike Mechanic · true, false or not given

Task: Listen to Daniel talking about changing his career. Write T (true), F (false) or NG (not given).

1. Daniel worked as an accountant for more than ten years.
2. He left his job because he was made redundant.
3. He took a course to learn his new trade.
4. He now earns more than he did before.
5. He regrets not changing career sooner.

8. The Returned Wallet · dictogloss

Task (dictogloss): Listen to a short story twice. The first time, just listen. The second time, write down key words only. Then work in groups of three to rebuild the story as closely as you can. It does not need to be word for word, but the grammar and meaning must be correct.

Key words:

_____
_____
_____

C1

9. A Street Without Cars · lecture notes

Task: Listen to part of a talk by an urban planner. Complete the notes in no more than five words each.

The problem: the high street was _____
What the council did: _____
Unexpected result 1: _____
Unexpected result 2: _____
Main criticism: _____
The speaker's conclusion: _____

10. Remote Work: Two Views · who says what?

Task: Listen to Sara and Tom discussing working from home. Who expresses each opinion? Write S (Sara), T (Tom) or B (both).

1. Working from home makes it harder to learn from colleagues.
2. Commuting time is the biggest cost of office work.
3. Companies use the office to check on staff rather than to help them.
4. The best arrangement depends on the stage of your career.
5. Meetings online are less tiring than people claim.

C2

11. The Tyranny of the To-Do List · stance and implied meaning

Task: Listen to an extract from a radio essay. Answer the questions.

1. What does the speaker mean by calling the list "a very polite tyrant"?
2. According to the speaker, what kind of tasks never make it onto a list?
3. What is ironic about the speaker's "system" of three lists?
4. What does "the list was doing the living for me" suggest?
5. Is the speaker recommending that people abandon lists? Justify your answer.

12. What Translation Loses · dictogloss

Task (dictogloss): Listen twice. The first time, just listen. The second time, note key words. In groups, reconstruct the paragraph so that it is accurate and close in meaning and register to the original.

Key words:

_____
_____
_____

Teacher's pages: scripts and answers

1. Script (read each sentence three times: once at normal speed, once slowly in chunks, once at normal speed again)
1. My name is Tom and I am eleven.
2. My classroom is on the first floor.
3. There are twenty chairs in the room.
4. The board is white and the door is green.
5. My bag is under my desk.

Check for: "There are" (not "Their are"), "twenty" spelled out, "first floor", "under". These are the words A1 students most often mishear or misspell in this set.

2. Script (read twice at a gentle, natural pace)
This is a photo of my family. My dad is tall and he has a black beard. My mum has short red hair. She is a nurse. This is my brother, Leo. He is eight. He has a dog called Max. Max is small and brown. And this is me, next to my mum. I have long hair and glasses.

Answers
1. True. He has a black beard.
2. Red.
3. She is a nurse.
4. Eight.
5. False. She has long hair.

3. Script (read twice; the second time, pause briefly after each sentence)
Hi Sam, it's Laura. I'm calling about Saturday. The football match starts at half past two, not two o'clock, so let's meet at the station at quarter to two. Bring some money for the train. A return ticket is six pounds fifty. After the match we can have pizza at Marco's on King Street. My phone is broken, so if there's a problem, call my brother. His number is on the class list. See you on Saturday!

Answers
1. two
2. station
3. 6.50
4. King
5. brother

Note: gap 1 is the classic trap. Laura says "half past two, not two o'clock". Students who stop listening at "two" still get it right; students who write "one" or "quarter" heard the meeting time instead.

4. Script (read twice; stress the sequencing words)
First, put two cups of flour in a big bowl. Next, add two eggs and a glass of milk. Mix everything together until it's smooth. Then heat a little oil in a pan. Pour some of the mix into the pan and cook it for about a minute. After that, turn the pancake over and cook the other side. Finally, put it on a plate and add some lemon and sugar.

Answers (top to bottom)
6, 1, 4, 7, 2, 5, 3

Follow-up: ask students which words told them the order (first, next, then, after that, finally) and have them give the instructions back to a partner from memory.

5. Script (read once at radio pace, then again a little slower)
Good morning, and here's some news for anyone planning to visit the Riverside Food Festival this weekend. Because heavy rain is forecast, the festival is moving from Riverside Park to the old market hall on Bridge Road. It opens on Friday at five p.m. and runs until Sunday evening. Children under twelve get in free. Adults pay four pounds on the door, or three pounds if you book online before Thursday. There'll be more than forty food stalls, a cooking competition for local schools on Saturday morning, and live music on both evenings. Parking near the market hall is very limited, so the organisers are asking everyone to come by bus. The number twelve will run every fifteen minutes all weekend instead of every half hour. And yes, dogs are welcome, as long as they stay on a lead.

Answers
1. In the old market hall (on Bridge Road).
2. Because heavy rain is forecast.
3. Three pounds.
4. A cooking competition for local schools.
5. Because there isn't much parking near the market hall.

Extension question: "Can you bring your dog?" (Yes, on a lead.) Good for checking that students caught the last sentence, which carries the answer after "and yes".

6. Script (two voices: read Jake and Priya with a clear change of voice or position, or give the script to two confident students; read twice)
JAKE: So, are we still going camping this weekend?
PRIYA: I don't think so. Have you seen the forecast? Rain all Saturday and strong wind on Sunday.
JAKE: Oh no. OK, what about the city instead? We could stay with my cousin.
PRIYA: That's a good idea. And the train's half price if we book today. Tomorrow it goes back to the normal fare.
JAKE: Then let's book now. What do you want to do there?
PRIYA: The science museum on Saturday afternoon, and maybe a film in the evening if we're not too tired.
JAKE: Fine by me. Can you book the tickets? I'll make some sandwiches for the train.
PRIYA: Deal.

Answers
1. a 2. b 3. a 4. a 5. b

Note: question 4 has a distractor. The museum is on Saturday afternoon, the film in the evening. Ask students who chose b to listen again for "in the evening".

7. Script (read twice, at natural speed; don't slow down for the numbers)
I was an accountant for twelve years, and for most of that time I was perfectly happy. Good salary, nice colleagues. But I'd always fixed bikes at the weekend, for friends at first, then for friends of friends, and at some point I noticed that Monday mornings felt like the end of something rather than the start. Nobody pushed me. The firm actually offered me a promotion the same month I handed in my notice, which made the decision feel slightly ridiculous. I did a six-month evening course in bicycle maintenance while I was still working, and then I rented a tiny workshop near the station. Financially, it's been tight. The first year was genuinely frightening. People ask whether I wish I'd done it at twenty-five instead of thirty-seven, and honestly, no. I don't think I'd have had the patience, or the savings, any earlier.

Answers
1. T (twelve years).
2. F. He handed in his notice; he was even offered a promotion.
3. T (a six-month evening course).
4. NG. He says money has been tight, but he never compares his earnings directly. Students often answer F here: push them to find the sentence that proves it.
5. F. He says he wouldn't have had the patience or the savings earlier.

8. Script (read twice at normal speed; do not slow down or repeat single sentences)
Last winter, a woman in our town dropped her wallet on a crowded bus. By the time she noticed, the bus had already left. She assumed she would never see it again, so she cancelled her cards and spent the evening feeling sorry for herself. Two days later, a teenager knocked on her door. He had found the wallet under a seat, seen her address on a library card and walked across town to return it. Everything was still inside, including the cash. When she tried to give him a reward, he refused, saying that his grandmother would never forgive him.

Check the groups' versions for: past perfect ("had already left", "had found"), "assumed she would never see it again", "so" and "including" as linkers, and the reported reason at the end ("saying that…"). Accept any version that keeps the meaning and is grammatically accurate. Then show the original and let groups compare it with theirs.

9. Script (read once at lecture pace; a second reading is optional at C1)
When the council first proposed closing the high street to cars, the objection was almost unanimous: the shops would die. And on paper the street was already dying. A quarter of the units were empty, footfall had fallen for six years running, and the traffic made it unpleasant to walk, let alone linger. So the council took the risk: cars out, benches and trees in, and a single bus lane kept open. Two things happened that nobody had predicted. The first was that the empty units filled, but not with the chain stores everyone had hoped for. They filled with cafés, repair shops and small independent businesses that depended on people walking slowly. The second was that the streets around the high street got quieter too, because drivers stopped using the area as a shortcut altogether. The criticism that remains, and it's a fair one, is that older residents who relied on parking outside the shops now find the street harder to reach. If there's a lesson, it's that removing cars doesn't save a street on its own. It changes who the street is for, and you have to decide in advance whether you're comfortable with that.

Answers (accept close paraphrases)
The problem: dying / a quarter of units empty / footfall falling
What the council did: closed the street to cars (kept one bus lane)
Unexpected result 1: empty units filled with independent businesses (not chains)
Unexpected result 2: surrounding streets got quieter
Main criticism: harder access for older residents
The speaker's conclusion: it changes who the street is for

10. Script (two voices; read twice)
SARA: I'll be honest, I don't miss the office at all. Two hours a day on a train is two hours I now spend sleeping, cooking, being a person.
TOM: I get that, but I started my job remotely, and I think I learned far more slowly than I would have done sitting next to people. You can't overhear a video call.
SARA: That's fair for someone new. I'd probably say the same if I were starting out. But for me, a lot of the push back to the office feels like managers wanting to see bodies at desks, not anything to do with learning.
TOM: Partly, maybe. Though I'd say it depends where you are in your career more than anything. Ten years in, you know who to ask. In your first year, you don't even know what to ask.
SARA: And everyone says video meetings are exhausting. I've never found them worse than sitting in a meeting room.
TOM: No, I'm with you there. It's the lack of meetings, the casual bits, that I miss.

Answers
1. T 2. S 3. S 4. B (Sara concedes it for someone new; Tom says it directly) 5. B (Tom: "I'm with you there")

Note: items 4 and 5 test agreement signalled by "I'd say the same" and "I'm with you there". Replay those lines if most of the class chose a single speaker.

11. Script (read once with natural intonation; let the irony be heard rather than signalled)
For years I kept a to-do list with the devotion other people reserve for religion. It was a very polite tyrant. It never shouted; it simply waited, and every evening it presented me with the evidence of everything I had failed to do. What it never contained, I noticed eventually, were the things that actually mattered: calling my father, reading something difficult, sitting still. Those don't fit neatly on a line with a box beside them. My solution, naturally, was a better system: one list for work, one for home, and a third for the things I kept moving from the other two. It took me an embarrassingly long time to see that the list was doing the living for me. I still keep one. I just no longer let it tell me whether the day went well.

Answers (accept well-argued alternatives)
1. It controls the speaker completely, but quietly, through guilt rather than force.
2. Important but unmeasurable things (relationships, deep reading, rest) that can't be ticked off.
3. The answer to an over-controlling list was more lists. The third list exists only for tasks that keep being postponed.
4. That ticking items off had replaced deciding what mattered: the speaker was managed by the list rather than living their own priorities.
5. No. The speaker still keeps one but no longer uses it to judge the day. The point is about the list's authority, not its use.

12. Script (read twice at a natural, measured pace)
Every translation is a series of small surrenders. A joke that depends on a double meaning has to be rebuilt from different materials or quietly let go; a formal pronoun that signals distance in one language has no equivalent in another, so the distance must be carried by vocabulary or rhythm instead. Good translators are not those who lose nothing, which is impossible, but those who choose deliberately what to lose, and who make sure the reader never feels the gap.

Check the groups' versions for: the extended metaphor (surrenders, rebuilt, materials, carried), the semicolon-linked parallel examples, the "not those who…, but those who…" contrast and its non-defining aside "which is impossible", and the final clause. A version that keeps the meaning but flattens the register ("translators can't translate everything") has missed the C2 point of the task. Show the original and discuss the differences.