

# Introduction

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In all of our everyday listening, the key to what we understand is not what we hear; it is our **purpose for listening**. For example, in the morning, we may be vaguely aware of a TV playing in the background while we focus on getting breakfast or our “to do” list for the day. When the weather or something else we want to know comes on the TV, we shift our attention to focus on the televised information. If a child needs our immediate attention, we shift our listening focus and adopt a parental listening style (Is the child okay physically and emotionally? How could I best help in this situation?).

Young children learn to listen for different reasons with different attention levels well before they enter the classroom. Within the classroom, they are taught to “be good listeners” by looking at the speaker, keeping their bodies still, not interrupting, etc. Such training covers more social behavior than listening comprehension or choosing the purpose for listening.

Most students learn to control their listening patterns without direct instruction as they are exposed to various listening situations. They learn to anticipate the teacher’s directions for what to do and to predict what questions the teacher will ask during various kinds of academic lessons. Other students need direct instruction in how to listen effectively.

*Spotlight on Listening Comprehension* was developed to teach students the importance of knowing what they are listening for and matching their listening comprehension strategies to their listening purposes. The six books in *Spotlight on Listening Comprehension* focus on these essential listening purposes and the corresponding comprehension strategies:

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| Listening for details    | Listening for making inferences             |
| Listening for main ideas | Listening for reasoning and problem solving |
| Listening for sequencing | Listening for story comprehension           |

These target areas parallel critical reading comprehension skills and will boost students’ performance in the classroom; on tests; and in everyday listening, reading, and speaking.

The content of the activities reflects a wide variety of curricular areas as well as daily life. The vocabulary and sentence structure are controlled at an elementary grade level to help your students focus on the listening comprehension element vs. novel terms or concepts.

Each book includes a Pretest/Posttest (page 6) to assess and monitor your students’ proficiency and progress. The worksheet activities require minimal writing and often feature a multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank format similar to tests. Use your own judgment and teaching purposes to present the activity sheets orally or as overheads for group presentation.

The activities in each book are sequenced by complexity. They begin by featuring the target skill in pictures to give visual information to facilitate comprehension. Then they address the target skill in listening activities. Repeat the information as necessary. For listening activities without visual cues,

students must visualize what they hear, keeping their listening purpose of finding the main idea in mind as they hear the information presented orally.

Wherever possible, encourage your students to explain the rationale or clues for their answers. This strategy strengthens their oral expression skills and gives other students practice in critical listening. It also allows your students to provide alternative answers that may be appropriate, depending on the students' explanations.

*Spotlight on Listening Comprehension: Details* teaches your students to listen for the details of what they hear and includes the following tasks that build in complexity:

- Students read single details to identify pictures.
- Students use picture clues to help solve riddles with three verbal clues.
- Students guess the answer to riddles without picture clues.
- Students follow and give directions to complete worksheet tasks.
- Students look at pictures to answer detail questions.
- Students hear single sentences and answer a question about a detail within each sentence.
- Students hear short passages and answer several questions about details within each passage.

All of the tasks in this book involve detecting details that are directly stated, not implied. Most of the questions echo the words of the listening passage to make answering easier. To increase the challenge, paraphrase the detail questions vs. repeating parts of the original message in your questions. Here are some additional activities to help your students master listening with the purpose of understanding and remembering details.

- Teach your students to visualize what they hear. Encourage them to take notes and/or draw to help them grasp and remember the details.
- Have your students repeat or paraphrase directions and short bits of information, such as an announcement, including salient details.
- Ask volunteers to read any paragraph from a newspaper, a magazine, or a textbook at the appropriate grade level. Then ask your students to recall all the details in what was read, prompting them with relevant questions as necessary.

We hope you and your students enjoy *Spotlight on Listening Comprehension: Details!*

Carolyn and Paul