

Tip # 3 Video

I'm Kristin Dodds, one of the directors of Learn Real English.

And I'm AJ Hoge, also one of the teachers and directors of Learn Real English.

And welcome to Rule #3. This is the listening rule. And it's probably the most important rule.

Yep, I'd say that Rule #3, listen, listen, listen, it's absolutely number one most important.

And it's one of the simplest rules, wouldn't you say AJ?

Yeah, it's very simple and it's easy. It's relaxing which is what I like about it. You know, just listen. Listen, listen, listen, it's really the number one key to speaking well.

Many people, myself included when I was learning a language, many people learn a language, they learn with their eyes, not with their ears.

Mm-hm.

For example, we learn, when you're learning a language you learn with a textbook. So many people learn, they think, they're reading, they're learning, they're thinking, they're studying about grammar rules. And therefore I probably know more grammar rules than a French person would learn. Or, I'm sorry, know. That's the language I learned when I was in high school and college. When in fact a native French person probably doesn't even pay attention to the tenses. They just naturally speak.

Yeah, I guarantee that no native speaker of any language, so native speaker of course means that you started learning when you were a baby. Nobody thinks about grammar rules while they're speaking because there is no time.

Right.

It's impossible to remember a grammar book this big each time you want to speak. I remember one time I was teaching and I was teaching articles...words like the, a, an, like an apple, the apple, and there were four pages of explanations on how to use those three words. We use those words in nearly every sentence. There's no way that your brain can think about four pages of rules every time you want to say the word "the". It's impossible.

Right.

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So studying grammar rules doesn't work. What does work is listening, listening, listening, until it becomes just easy and automatic. And that's what you want to do. That's why this rule is so powerful. This is how babies learn. They learn to speak their language through listening.

Yeah, and I also want to point out that a lot of times when learning a language in the traditional way, there is a focus put on speaking as well.

Mm-hm, that's right.

And again, babies you know, they take...they don't start speaking until they're two years old. They're just listening. They're taking it all in.

That's right, I think students need to relax more because they get really stressful and nervous about, you know, their speaking mistakes. But great speaking comes from great listening. And really you need to listen, I think for probably four to six months, focus only on listening first. Focus on that, just listening. Don't worry about speaking. I mean you can speak if you want to, but don't force it. Don't get upset if you make mistakes. Your number one focus must be listening, listening, listening, for at least six months. More is okay.

So, there's two important things here to remember with the listening. The first one is how. How should you listen? You should make sure that it's really simple English. Bare English. You want to be able to understand about 95%. There's been a lot of research done on this to prove that if the input is too high, if it's just too difficult...

Then you're not going to understand.

Yeah, you're not going to take it in.

Yeah, you're not going to learn fast so that's another mistake a lot of students make. They try to listen to things that are much too difficult. They're trying to listen to, you know, movies...

Right.

...they're trying to listen to CNN and the BBC.

Yeah, I was going to say the news.

And that's just too difficult for a lot of people. So the rule is you should understand 95% of the words of everything. So you're watching something, you're listening to something. If you understand 95%, perfect, it's a good level for you. If you don't understand that much, if it's more difficult, find something easier.

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And it could even be a child's movie.

Yeah, children's books, children's movies...

Yeah.

...audiobooks, really for listening. Easy podcasts...

Mm-hm.

...anything like that, easy, easy, easy is the most important thing.

And the second thing to focus on is when. And as AJ has been saying many times, just listen, listen, listen to as many things as you can in English.

As much as possible, there's no limits really...

As much as possible, right.

Do it in the morning when you get up. When you go to work. During your lunch break. When you're coming home. At night at home. Just as much listening as you can, that's why it's great to use an iPod because you can do it during the day as you go around doing shopping, exercising, and in a bus, in a train, anywhere, anytime.

So that's, that's it, I guess, right?

That's it for Rule #3.

Rule #3...listen, listen, listen and listen some more. Learn with your ears. Alright, see you for the next rule.

Bye.