

AOC-Check: Tips for Study Techniques

How you can improve your listening skills

The results of the AOC-check tell you about your strengths and weaknesses. Here are some tips that help you to improve your listening skills.

I can do it!

First of all, you have to tell yourself *"I can do it."* This makes you feel positive before you start listening to a text. Sometimes speakers have a special accent that you have to cope with. When you are practicing listening at home, you can get started by listening in to a text to get accustomed to the voice and tempo and then start again. Sometimes it helps to lean back, listen and find out what the speaker wants to tell you.

The text is not too fast, you are listening too slowly

When you think a text is too fast for you, this means that you are listening too slowly. Here it helps to divide the text into short portions and to go back and listen to some passages again. It is also important to have the courage to leave gaps. This means that you should leave passages you have problems with behind. Usually you understand them later from the context of the whole text. Before you start listening, you should find out what the text could be about. If you know the topic, you can start by *"asking questions about the text"*. You think about what kind of information you expect. This helps you to get the meaning of the text.

Take your chance!

And last, you should use any chance you get to listen to English. Get on the web and find podcasts, interviews, speeches and talks, listen to everything you are interested in on YouTube. Watch DVDs you know in German already in English for a change. If you use the English subtitles, this helps you to understand unfamiliar words. Take the courage and try to get positive about listening in English.

How you can improve your reading skills

Look at your AOC listening results and find out what you are good at already and where you need some more training.

Know your strategies

You can skim through a text to find out what it is about. So, you can decide if you want to read it in more detail. You can scan a text to find specific information. This is what you do for example when you go through a menu to find your favourite dish. If you don't have a clear idea about what a word means, you can find the meaning with the help of the context. Therefore, you should not stick to a word you do not get but read on, so you don't lose the overall message of a text. But sometimes it is also necessary to go back and read a passage of the text again to get any specific information.

Take your time but have a time limit

You will adapt your reading strategies to the situation and the purpose of reading. Sometimes you'll find it easy to read a more difficult text if you have a keen interest in the topic. Sometimes you have to get information quickly and highlight the most important ideas to have them at hand for a discussion. If you read longer texts like books or stories, you should choose a text that is not too difficult. This makes you read faster and you avoid losing interest.

Take your chance!

With every text you read in English, you will get better. Check out the internet to find out all about your future job. Collect information about your favourite sports or hobbies. Read the news on topics you know about in

German already. This helps you understand. And finally: Check words you do not understand. The wider your range of vocabulary, the more you will enjoy reading.

How you can improve your writing skills

First you should ask your teacher for detailed feedback on your AOC writing results. This is how you get concrete information about your strengths and weaknesses when writing texts. Listen carefully and remember what you have to keep in mind when writing texts in the future.

Just write and write and write

And what now? ... You can best improve your writing if you write and write and write. Put aside the first draft and read it again after one or two days. Work with the *AOC Writing – Self Assessment Grid* and find out how the questions apply to your text. When your teacher corrects your texts, always write an improved version.

Increase your vocabulary

Do something in English as often as you can: reading, internet surfing, listening to podcasts, watching TV – whatever you like doing. Whenever you come across a word you like or need – put it down in your (personal) vocabulary book or add it to your vocabulary builder app. Read through your word lists or quiz yourself every day. Constant repetition helps you to master new words in no time. Try to use new words and phrases as soon as you have a chance.

Improve your grammar

But how? ... It's as simple as that: practice makes perfect. Train your grammar online with the help of thousands of websites. Enter any grammar topic in your search machine and the exercises will help you to learn the basics of the language and gradually improve your grammar as well.

How you can improve your speaking skills

First you should ask your teacher for specific feedback on your AOC Speaking Check to find out about what you are good at and what you should improve. Pay attention and keep in mind what to take care of in future training.

Get yourself talking

And what now? ... You can best improve your speaking skills if you chat and chat and chat. Take an active part in your English lessons and use every chance during pair-work or group-work to use English only. You can record any oral activity you do and listen to it later. Make an improved version if you don't like how you said things. You can also record a short dialogue with a friend. Use the *AOC Speaking – Self Assessment Grid*, answer the questions and find out how good you are. It might sound strange to speak in front of a mirror at home, but this is an excellent exercise to know how you sound and gives you the confidence to speak with others more naturally.

Give your vocabulary and grammar a boost

The more words you can use and the better you know your grammar, the easier you will find it to speak. As in writing, you should carry on training these skills and try to get a lot of practice. Also work on your pronunciation and intonation. Watch series in English, listen to podcasts and check the pronunciation of words and how the voices rise and fall when people show they are interested, surprised, ask a question, etc. Repeat unfamiliar expressions or any statement you like.

So, enjoy your English lessons and use English as much as you can.