

# Independent Student Handbook

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## LISTENING SKILLS

### Predicting

Speakers giving formal talks usually begin by introducing themselves and their topic. Listen carefully to the introduction of the topic so that you can predict what the talk will be about.

#### Strategies:

- Use visual information including titles on the board or on presentation slides.
- Think about what you already know about the topic.
- Ask yourself questions that you think the speaker might answer.
- Listen for specific phrases that indicate an introduction (e.g., *My topic is...*).

### Listening for Main Ideas

It's important to be able to tell the difference between a speaker's main ideas and supporting details. It is more common for teachers to test students' understanding of main ideas than of specific details.

#### Strategies:

- Listen carefully to the introduction. Speakers often state the main idea in the introduction.
- Listen for rhetorical questions, or questions that the speaker asks, and then answers. Often the answer is the statement of the main idea.
- Notice words and phrases that the speaker repeats. Repetition often signals main ideas.

### Listening for Details (Examples)

A speaker often provides examples that support a main idea. A good example can help you understand and remember the main idea better.

#### Strategies:

- Listen for specific phrases that introduce examples.
- Listen for general statements. Examples often follow general statements.

## Listening for Details (Reasons)

Speakers often give reasons or list causes and/or effects to support their ideas.

### Strategies:

- Notice nouns that might signal causes/reasons (e.g., *factors, influences, causes, reasons*) or effects/results (e.g., *effects, results, outcomes, consequences*).
- Notice verbs that might signal causes/reasons (e.g., *contribute to, affect, influence, determine, produce, result in*) or effects/results (often these are passive, e.g., *is affected by*).

## Understanding the Structure of a Presentation

An organized speaker uses expressions to alert the audience to important information that will follow. Recognizing signal words and phrases will help you understand how a presentation is organized and the relationship between ideas.

### Introduction

A good introduction identifies the topic and gives an idea of how the lecture or presentation will be organized. Here are some expressions to introduce a topic:

*I'll be talking about . . .*                      *My topic is . . .*  
*There are basically two groups . . .*        *There are three reasons . . .*

### Body

In the body of a lecture, speakers usually expand upon the topic. They often use phrases that signal the order of events or subtopics and their relationship to each other. Here are some expressions to help listeners follow the body of a lecture:

*The first/next/final (point/reason) is . . .*      *First/Next/Finally, let's look at . . .*  
*Another reason is . . .*                              *However, . . .*

### Conclusion

In the conclusion of a lecture, speakers often summarize what they have said. They may also make predictions or suggestions. Sometimes they ask a question in the conclusion to get the audience to think more about the topic. Here are some expressions to give a conclusion:

*In conclusion, . . .*                                      *In summary, . . .*  
*As you can see . . .*                                *To review, + (restatement of main points)*

## Understanding Meaning from Context

When you are not familiar with a word that a speaker says, you can sometimes guess the meaning of the word or fill in the gaps using the context or situation itself.

### Strategies:

- Don't panic. You don't always understand every word of what a speaker says in your first language, either.
- Use context clues to fill in the blanks. What did you understand just before or just after the missing part? What did the speaker probably say?
- Listen for words and phrases that signal a definition or explanation (e.g., *What that means is . . .*).

## Recognizing a Speaker's Bias

Speakers often have an opinion about the topic they are discussing. It's important for you to know if they are objective or subjective about the topic. Objective speakers do not express an opinion. Subjective speakers have a bias or a strong feeling about the topic.

### Strategies:

- Notice words like adjectives, adverbs, and modals that the speaker uses (e.g., *ideal, horribly, should, shouldn't*). These suggest that the speaker has a bias.
- Listen to the speaker's voice. Does he or she sound excited, angry, or bored?
- Notice if the speaker gives more weight or attention to one point of view over another.
- Listen for words that signal opinions (e.g., *I think . . .*).

## NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Taking notes is a personalized skill. It is important to develop a note-taking system that works for you. However, there are some common strategies to improve your note taking.

### Before You Listen

#### Focus

Try to clear your mind before the speaker begins so you can pay attention. If possible, review previous notes or think about what you already know about the topic.

#### Predict

If you know the topic of the talk, think about what you might hear.

### Listen

#### Take Notes by Hand

Research suggests that taking notes by hand rather than on a computer is more effective. Taking notes by hand requires you to summarize, rephrase, and synthesize information. This helps you *encode* the information, or put it into a form that you can understand and remember.

#### Listen for Signal Words and Phrases

Speakers often use signal words and phrases (e.g., *Today we're going to talk about . . .*) to organize their ideas and show relationships between them. Listening for signal words and phrases can help you decide what information to write in your notes.

#### Condense (Shorten) Information

- As you listen, focus on the most important ideas. The speaker will usually repeat, define, explain, and/or give examples of these ideas. Take notes on these ideas.

Speaker: *The Itaipu Dam provides about 20% of the electricity used in Brazil, and about 75% of the electricity used in Paraguay. That electricity goes to millions of homes and businesses, so it's good for the economy of both countries.*

Notes: *Itaipu Dam → electricity: Brazil 20%, Paraguay 75%*

- Don't write full sentences. Write only key words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs), phrases, or short sentences.

Full sentence: *Teachers are normally at the top of the list of happiest jobs.*

Notes: *teachers happiest*

- Leave out information that is obvious.  
Full sentence: *Photographer Annie Griffiths is famous for her beautiful photographs. She travels all over the world to take photos.*  
Notes: *A. Griffiths travels world*
- Write numbers and statistics. (9 bil; 35%)
- Use abbreviations (e.g., *ft., min., yr*) and symbols (=, ≠, >, <, %, →)
- Use indenting. Write main ideas on left side of paper. Indent details.  
*Benefits of eating ugly foods*  
*Save \$*  
*10-20% on ugly fruits & vgs. at market*
- Write details under key terms to help you remember them.
- Write the definitions of important new words.

### After You Listen

- Review your notes soon after the lecture or presentation. Add any details you missed.
- Clarify anything you don't understand in your notes with a classmate or teacher.
- Add or highlight main ideas. Cross out details that aren't important or necessary.
- Rewrite anything that is hard to read or understand. Rewrite your notes in an outline or other graphic organizer to organize the information more clearly.
- Use arrows, boxes, diagrams, or other visual cues to show relationships between ideas.

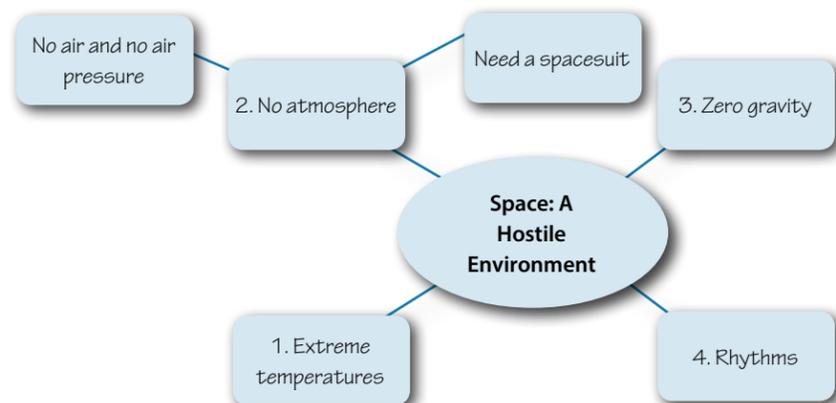
## ORGANIZING INFORMATION

You can use a graphic organizer to take notes while you are listening, or to organize your notes after you listen. Here are some examples of graphic organizers:

**Flowcharts** are used to show processes, or cause/effect relationships.



**Mind maps** show the connection between concepts. The main idea is usually in the center with supporting ideas and details around it.



**Outlines** show the relationship between main ideas and details.

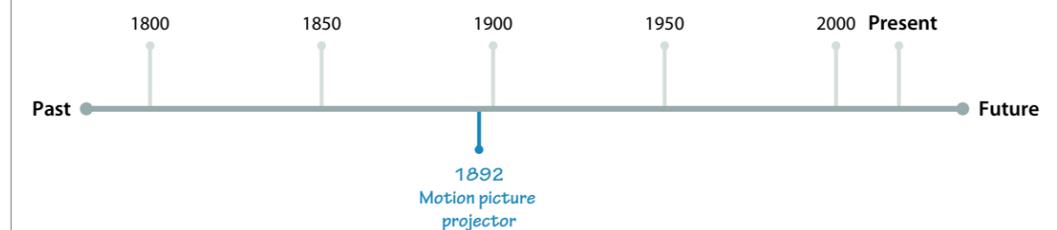
To use an outline for taking notes, write the main ideas at the left margin of your paper. Below the main ideas, indent and write the supporting ideas and details. You may do this as you listen, or go back and rewrite your notes as an outline later.

- I. Introduction:** *How to feed the world*
- II. Steps**
- Step One: Stop deforestation*
- a. stop burning rainforests*
- b. grow crops on land size of South America*

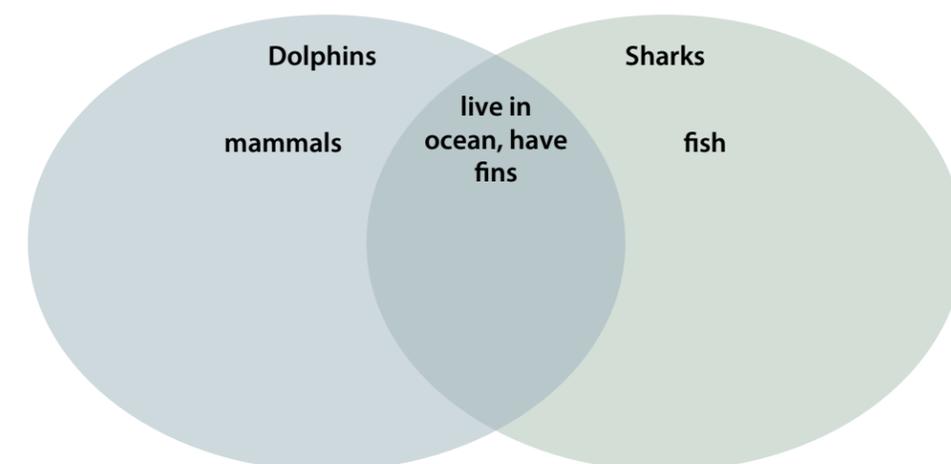
**T-charts** compare two topics.

Climate Change in Greenland	
Benefits	Drawbacks
shorter winters	rising sea levels

**Timelines** show a sequence of events.



**Venn diagrams** compare and contrast two or more topics. The overlapping areas show similarities.



## SPEAKING: PHRASES FOR CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

Phrases for Expressing Yourself	
<b>Expressing Opinions</b> <i>I think...</i> <i>I believe...</i> <i>I'm sure...</i> <i>In my opinion/view...</i> <i>If you ask me,...</i> <i>Personally,...</i> <i>To me,...</i>	<b>Expressing Likes and Dislikes</b> <i>I like...</i> <i>I prefer...</i> <i>I love...</i> <i>I can't stand...</i> <i>I hate...</i> <i>I really don't like...</i> <i>I don't care for...</i>
<b>Giving Facts</b> <i>There is evidence/proof...</i> <i>Experts claim/argue...</i> <i>Studies show...</i> <i>Researchers found...</i> <i>The record shows...</i>	<b>Giving Tips or Suggestions</b> <i>Imperatives (e.g., Try to get more sleep.)</i> <i>You/We should/shouldn't...</i> <i>You/We ought to...</i> <i>It's (not) a good idea to...</i> <i>I suggest (that)...</i> <i>Let's...</i> <i>How about... + (noun/gerund)</i> <i>What about... + (noun/gerund)</i> <i>Why don't we/you...</i> <i>You/We could...</i>
<b>Agreeing</b> <i>I agree.</i> <i>True.</i> <i>Good point.</i> <i>Exactly.</i> <i>Absolutely.</i> <i>I was just about to say that.</i> <i>Definitely.</i> <i>Right!</i>	<b>Disagreeing</b> <i>I disagree.</i> <i>I'm not so sure about that.</i> <i>I don't know.</i> <i>That's a good point, but I don't agree.</i> <i>I see what you mean, but I think that...</i>

Phrases for Interacting with Others	
<b>Clarifying/Checking Your Understanding</b> <i>So are you saying that...?</i> <i>So what you mean is...?</i> <i>What do you mean?</i> <i>How's that?</i> <i>How so?</i> <i>I'm not sure I understand/follow.</i> <i>Do you mean...?</i> <i>I'm not sure what you mean.</i>	<b>Asking for Clarification/Confirming Understanding</b> <i>Sorry, I didn't catch that. Could you repeat it?</i> <i>I'm not sure I understand the question.</i> <i>I'm not sure I understand what you mean.</i> <i>Sorry, I'm not following you.</i> <i>Are you saying that...?</i> <i>If I understand correctly, you're saying that...</i> <i>Oh, now I get it. You're talking about..., right?</i>
<b>Checking Others' Understanding</b> <i>Does that make sense?</i> <i>Do you understand?</i> <i>Do you see what I mean?</i> <i>Is that clear?</i> <i>Are you following/with me?</i> <i>Do you have any questions?</i>	<b>Asking for Opinions</b> <i>What do you think?</i> <i>We haven't heard from you in a while.</i> <i>Do you have anything to add?</i> <i>What are your thoughts?</i> <i>How do you feel?</i> <i>What's your opinion?</i>
<b>Taking Turns</b> <i>Can/May I say something?</i> <i>Could I add something?</i> <i>Can I just say...?</i> <i>May I continue?</i> <i>Can I finish what I was saying?</i> <i>Did you finish your thought?</i> <i>Let me finish.</i> <i>Let's get back to...</i>	<b>Interrupting Politely</b> <i>Excuse me.</i> <i>Pardon me.</i> <i>Forgive me for interrupting...</i> <i>I hate to interrupt but...</i> <i>Can I stop you for a second?</i>
<b>Asking for Repetition</b> <i>Could you say that again?</i> <i>I'm sorry?</i> <i>I didn't catch what you said.</i> <i>I'm sorry. I missed that. What did you say?</i> <i>Could you repeat that please?</i>	<b>Showing Interest</b> <i>I see.</i> <i>Good for you.</i> <i>Really?</i> <i>Seriously?</i> <i>Um-hmm.</i> <i>No kidding!</i> <i>Wow.</i> <i>And? (Then what?)</i> <i>That's funny / amazing / incredible / awful!</i>

## SPEAKING: PHRASES FOR PRESENTING

Introduction	
<b>Introducing a Topic</b> <i>I'm going to talk about...</i> <i>My topic is...</i> <i>I'm going to present...</i> <i>I plan to discuss...</i> <i>Let's start with...</i>	<i>Today we're going to talk about...</i> <i>So we're going to show you...</i> <i>Now/Right/So/Well, (pause), let's look at...</i> <i>There are three groups/reasons/effects/factors...</i> <i>There are four steps in this process.</i>
Body	
<b>Listing or Sequencing</b> <i>First/First of all/The first (noun)/To start/To begin,...</i> <i>Second/Secondly/The second/Next/Another/Also/Then/In addition,...</i> <i>Last/The last/Finally,...</i> <i>There are many/several/three types/kinds of ways,...</i>	<b>Signaling Problems/Solutions</b> <i>The one problem/issue/challenge is...</i> <i>The one solution/answer/response is...</i>
<b>Giving Reasons or Causes</b> <i>Because + (clause): Because the climate is changing...</i> <i>Because of + (noun phrase): Because of climate change...</i> <i>Due to + (noun phrase)...</i> <i>Since + (clause)</i> <i>The reason that I like hip-hop is...</i> <i>One reason that people listen to music is...</i> <i>One factor is + (noun phrase)</i> <i>The main reason that...</i>	<b>Giving Results or Effects</b> <i>so + (clause): so I went to the symphony</i> <i>Therefore, + (sentence): Therefore, I went to the symphony.</i> <i>As a result, + (sentence).</i> <i>Consequently, + (sentence).</i> <i>...causes + (noun phrase)</i> <i>...leads to + (noun phrase)</i> <i>...had an impact/effect on + (noun phrase)</i> <i>If...then...</i>
<b>Giving Examples</b> <i>The first example is...</i> <i>Here's an example of what I mean...</i> <i>For instance,...</i> <i>For example,...</i> <i>Let me give you an example...</i> <i>...such as...</i> <i>...like...</i>	<b>Repeating and Rephrasing</b> <i>What you need to know is...</i> <i>I'll say this again...</i> <i>So again, let me repeat...</i> <i>The most important point is...</i>

<b>Signaling Additional Examples or Ideas</b> <i>Not only...but, besides</i> <i>Besides...</i> <i>Not only do..., but also</i>	<b>Signaling to Stop Taking Notes</b> <i>You don't need this for the test.</i> <i>This information is in your books/on your handout/on the website.</i> <i>You don't have to write all this down.</i>
<b>Identifying a Side Track</b> <i>This is off-topic,...</i> <i>On a different subject,...</i> <i>As an aside, ...</i> <i>That reminds me...</i>	<b>Returning to a Previous Topic</b> <i>Getting back to our previous discussion,...</i> <i>To return to our earlier topic...</i> <i>OK, getting back on topic...</i> <i>So to return to what we were saying,...</i>
<b>Signaling a Definition</b> <i>Which means...</i> <i>What that means is...</i> <i>Or...</i> <i>In other words,...</i> <i>Another way to say that is...</i> <i>That is...</i> <i>That is to say...</i>	<b>Talking about Visuals</b> <i>This graph/infographic/diagram shows/explains...</i> <i>The line/box/image represents...</i> <i>The main point of this visual is...</i> <i>You can see...</i> <i>From this we can see...</i>
Conclusion	
<b>Concluding</b> <i>Well/So, that's how I see it.</i> <i>In conclusion,</i> <i>In summary,</i>	<i>To sum up,</i> <i>As you can see,...</i> <i>At the end,...</i> <i>To review, (+ restatement of main points)</i>

## PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

You will often have to give individual or group presentations in your class. The strategies below will help you to prepare, present, and reflect on your presentations.

### Prepare

As you prepare your presentation:

### Consider Your Topic

- **Choose a topic you feel passionate about.** If you are passionate about your topic, your audience will be more interested and excited about your topic, too. Focus on one major idea that you can bring to life. The best ideas are the ones your audience wants to experience.

## Consider Your Purpose

- **Have a strong start.** Use an effective hook, such as a quote, an interesting example, a rhetorical question, or a powerful image to get your audience's attention. Include one sentence that explains what you will do in your presentation and why.
- **Stay focused.** Make sure your details and examples support your main points. Avoid sidetracks or unnecessary information that takes you away from your topic.
- **Use visuals that relate to your ideas.** Drawings, photos, video clips, infographics, charts, maps, slides, and physical objects can get your audience's attention and explain ideas effectively. For example, a photo or map of a location you mention can help your audience picture a place they have never been. Slides with only key words and phrases can help emphasize your main points. Visuals should be bright, clear, and simple.
- **Have a strong conclusion.** A strong conclusion should serve the same purpose as a strong start—to get your audience's attention and make them think. Good conclusions often refer back to the introduction, or beginning of the presentation. For example, if you ask a question in the beginning, you can answer it in the conclusion. Remember to restate your main points, and add a conclusion device such as a question, a call to action, or a quote.

## Consider your Audience

- **Use familiar concepts.** Think about the people in your audience. Ask yourself these questions: Where are they from? How old are they? What is their background? What do they already know about my topic? What information do I need to explain? Use language and concepts they will understand.
- **Share a personal story.** Consider presenting information that will get an emotional reaction; for example, information that will make your audience feel surprised, curious, worried, or upset. This will help your audience relate to you and your topic.
- **Be authentic (be yourself!).** Write your presentation yourself. Use words that you know and are comfortable using.

## Rehearse

- **Make an outline** to help you organize your ideas.
- **Write notes on notecards.** Do not write full sentences, just key words and phrases to help you remember important ideas. Mark the words you should stress and places to pause.
- **Review pronunciation.** Check the pronunciation of words you are uncertain about with a classmate, a teacher, or in a dictionary. Note and practice the pronunciation of difficult words.
- **Memorize the introduction and conclusion.** Rehearse your presentation several times. Practice saying it out loud to yourself (perhaps in front of a mirror or video recorder) and in front of others.
- **Ask for feedback.** Note and revise information that doesn't flow smoothly based on feedback and on your own performance in rehearsal. If specific words or phrases are still a problem, rephrase them.

## Present

As you present:

- **Pay attention to your pacing** (how fast or slow you speak). Remember to speak slowly and clearly. Pause to allow your audience to process information.
- **Speak at a volume loud enough to be heard** by everyone in the audience, but not too loud. Ask the audience if your volume is OK at the beginning of your talk.

- **Vary your intonation.** Don't speak in the same tone throughout the talk. Your audience will be more interested if your voice rises and falls, speeds up and slows down to match the ideas you are talking about.
- **Be friendly and relaxed with your audience**—remember to smile!
- **Show enthusiasm for your topic.** Use humor if appropriate.
- **Have a relaxed body posture.** Don't stand with your arms folded, or look down at your notes. Use gestures when helpful to emphasize your points.
- **Don't read directly from your notes.** Use them to help you remember ideas.
- **Don't look at or read from your visuals too much.** Use them to support your ideas.
- **Make frequent eye contact** with the entire audience.

## Reflect

As you reflect on your presentation:

- **Consider what you think went well** during your presentation and what areas you can improve upon.
- **Get feedback** from your classmates and teacher. How do their comments relate to your own thoughts about your presentation? Did they notice things you didn't? How can you use their feedback in your next presentation?

## PRESENTATION OUTLINE

When you are planning a presentation, you may find it helpful to use an outline. If it is a group presentation, the outline can provide an easy way to divide the content. For example, one student can do the introduction, another student the first idea in the body, and so on.

### 1. Introduction

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Hook: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Body

First step/example/reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

Second step/example/reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

Third step/example/reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Conclusion

Main points to summarize: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions/Predictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Closing comments/summary: \_\_\_\_\_

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

### Sounds and Symbols

Vowels		Consonants			
Symbol	Key Words	Symbol	Key Word	Symbol	Key Word
/ɑ/	hot, stop	/b/	boy	/t/	tea
/æ/	cat, ran	/d/	day	/tʃ/	cheap
/aɪ/	fine, nice	/dʒ/	job, bridge	/v/	vote
/i/	eat, need	/f/	face	/w/	we
/ɪ/	sit, him	/g/	go	/y/	yes
/eɪ/	name, say	/h/	hat	/z/	zoo
/ɛ/	get, bed	/k/	key, car		
/ʌ/	cup, what	/l/	love	/ð/	they
/ə/	about, lesson	/m/	my	/θ/	think
/u/	boot, new	/n/	nine	/ʃ/	shoe
/ʊ/	book, could	/ŋ/	sing	/ʒ/	measure
/oʊ/	go, road	/p/	pen		
/ɔ/	law, walk	/r/	right		
/aʊ/	house, now	/s/	see		
/ɔɪ/	toy, coin				

Source: *The Newbury House Dictionary plus Grammar Reference*, Fifth Edition, National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning, 2014.

### Rhythm

The rhythm of English involves stress and pausing.

#### Stress

- English words are based on syllables—units of sound that include one vowel sound.
- In every word in English, one syllable has the primary stress.
- In English, speakers group words that go together based on the meaning and context of the sentence. These groups of words are called *thought groups*. In each thought group, one word is stressed more than the others—the stress is placed on the syllable with the primary stress in this word.
- In general, new ideas and information are stressed.

#### Pausing

- Pauses in English can be divided into two groups: long and short pauses.
- English speakers use long pauses to mark the conclusion of a thought, items in a list, or choices given.
- Short pauses are used in between thought groups to break up the ideas in sentences into smaller, more manageable chunks of information.

### Intonation

English speakers use intonation, or pitch (the rise and fall of their voice), to help express meaning. For example, speakers usually use a rising intonation at the end of *yes/no* questions, and a falling intonation at the end of *wh-* questions and statements.

## VOCABULARY BUILDING STRATEGIES

Vocabulary learning is an on-going process. The strategies below will help you learn and remember new vocabulary words.

### Guessing Meaning from Context

You can often guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word by looking at or listening to the words and sentences around it. Speakers usually know when a word is unfamiliar to the audience, or is essential to understanding the main ideas, and often provide clues to its meaning.

- Repetition: A speaker may use the same key word or phrase, or use another form of the same word.
- Restatement or synonym: A speaker may give a synonym to explain the meaning of a word, using phrases such as, *in other words, also called, or... also known as*.
- Antonyms: A speaker may define a word by explaining what it is NOT. The speaker may say *Unlike A/In contrast to A, B is...*
- Definition: Listen for signals such as *which means* or *is defined as*. Definitions can also be signaled by a pause.
- Examples: A speaker may provide examples that can help you figure out what something is. For example, **Mascots** are a very popular marketing tool. You've seen them on commercials and in ads on social media – **cute, brightly colored creatures that help sell a product**.

## Understanding Word Families: Stems, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Use your understanding of stems, prefixes, and suffixes to recognize unfamiliar words and to expand your vocabulary. The stem is the root part of the word, which provides the main meaning. A prefix comes before the stem and usually modifies meaning (e.g., adding *re-* to a word means “again” or “back”). A suffix comes after the stem and usually changes the part of speech (e.g., adding *-ion*, *-tion*, or *-ation* to a verb changes it to a noun). Words that share the same stem or root belong to the same word family (e.g., *event*, *eventful*, *uneventful*, *uneventfully*).

Word Stem	Meaning	Example
<i>ann, enn</i>	year	anniversary, millennium
<i>chron(o)</i>	time	chronological, synchronize
<i>flex, flect</i>	bend	flexible, reflection
<i>graph</i>	draw, write	graphics, paragraph
<i>lab</i>	work	labor, collaborate
<i>mob, mot, mov</i>	move	automobile, motivate, mover
<i>port</i>	carry	transport, import
<i>sect</i>	cut	sector, bisect

Prefix	Meaning	Example
<i>dis-</i>	not, opposite of	disappear, disadvantages
<i>in-, im-, il-, ir-</i>	not	inconsistent, immature, illegal, irresponsible
<i>inter-</i>	between	Internet, international
<i>mis-</i>	bad, badly, incorrectly	misunderstand, misjudge
<i>pre-</i>	before	prehistoric, preheat
<i>re-</i>	again; back	repeat; return
<i>trans-</i>	across, beyond	transfer, translate
<i>un-</i>	not	uncooked, unfair

Suffix	Meaning	Example
<i>-able, -ible</i>	worth, ability	believable, impossible
<i>-en</i>	to cause to become; made of	lengthen, strengthen; golden
<i>-er, -or</i>	one who	teacher, director
<i>-ful</i>	full of	beautiful, successful
<i>-ify, -fy</i>	to make or become	simplify, satisfy
<i>-ion, -tion, -ation</i>	condition, action	occasion, education, foundation
<i>-ize</i>	cause	modernize, summarize
<i>-ly</i>	in the manner of	carefully, happily
<i>-ment</i>	condition or result	assignment, statement
<i>-ness</i>	state of being	happiness, sadness

## Using a Dictionary

Here are some tips for using a dictionary:

- When you see or hear a new word, try to guess its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and meaning, then look it up in a dictionary.
- Some words have multiple meanings. Look up a new word in the dictionary and try choose the correct meaning for the context. Then see if it makes sense within the context.
- When you look up a word, look at all the definitions to see if there is a basic core meaning. This will help you understand the word when it is used in a different context. Also look at all the related words, or words in the same family. This can help you expand your vocabulary. For example, the core meaning of *structure* involves something built or put together.

**structure** /'strʌktʃə/ *n.* **1 [C]** a building of any kind: *A new structure is being built on the corner.* **2 [C]** any architectural object of any kind: *The Eiffel Tower is a famous Parisian structure.* **3 [U]** the way parts are put together or organized: *the structure of a song* | *a business's structure*  
*-v.* **[T]** **-tured, -turing, -tures** to put together or organize parts of s.t.: *We are structuring a plan to hire new teachers.*  
*-adj.* **structural.**

Source: *The Newbury House Dictionary plus Grammar Reference*, Fifth Edition, National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning, 2014

## Multi-Word Units

You can improve your fluency if you learn and use vocabulary as multi-word units: idioms (*go the extra mile*), collocations (*wide range*), and fixed expressions (*in other words*). Some multi-word units can only be understood as a chunk – the individual words do not add up to the same overall meaning. Keep track of multi-word units in a notebook or on notecards.

## Vocabulary Note Cards

You can expand your vocabulary by using vocabulary note cards or a vocabulary building app. Write the word, expression, or sentence that you want to learn on one side. On the other, draw a four-square grid and write the following information in the squares: definition; translation (in your first language); sample sentence; synonyms. Choose words that are high frequency or on the academic word list. If you have looked a word up a few times, you should make a card for it.

definition:	first language translation:
sample sentence:	synonyms:

Organize the cards in review sets so you can practice them. Don't put words that are similar in spelling or meaning in the same review set as you may get them mixed up. Go through the cards and test yourself on the words or expressions. You can also practice with a partner.