



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**English – I (Basic English)**  
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**Listening to Longer Technical Talks**

Welcome, the topic for today's session is listening to Longer Technical Talks. Listening to longer technical talks is certainly a requirement for learners. It was back then, even a few decades ago, and it still is. A few decades ago, it would be more of listening directly in a physical classroom.

Today, when we talk of longer technical talks, we could perhaps also include audio digital like podcasts, apart from an actual physical classroom the exercise of listening is one that in itself requires bodily effort, focus, concentration, one has to be physically present in the here and the now. I like to call listening as hear and now, h-e-a-r, we need to be here and hear and be now. There is a saying that, 'that which moves fastest is thought.'

And thought of course, can switch from the classroom, from the talk to a conversation with a friend to our favourite ice cream, to the sun shining in summer, to anything that would engage the mind. It is quite a task to bring it back and to focus, and listen. When it comes to technical talks, the task could be extremely easy, if we already like the subject, if we are already interested in knowing more about the subject.

If the person who is speaking is challenging our knowledge, growing our knowledge, throwing lots of new information. If the person who is speaking is giving that new information in very creative interesting ways, simple yet engaging ways. The task is so much more easier if the speaker is ensuring that there is participation or interaction and there is active listening created in different ways, maybe not even actual interaction but in different ways, maybe giving tasks but creating an active listener.

In all these ways our task of listening would get simplified, it is also easier to listen if other factors of distractions are taken care of, like the temperature is right, it is not too cold, it is not too hot, the noise levels are perfect, it is not so noisy, that everything is distracting you, it is not super silent, that you are falling asleep, these would contribute to an ideal condition for listening to longer technical talks.

However, if these fall in place, congratulations, great, please go ahead, concentrate, make your notes identify the key concepts and themes and have fun, if not, there would be that little

bit more effort required from us the listener to be able to benefit meaningfully from this exercise. Listening to a longer technical talk could become simpler, easier, more effective, more valuable, impactful and having a better outcome for us.

The listener who is investing time and energy, if we could take care of a few things that are within our area of control of power. One, it is good to prepare yourself for a listening exercise in whatever way works for you. For example, if I have a lecture to attend in the afternoon just post lunch, I might take a black coffee just before that, which is going to help me stay awake.

Whatever is your black coffee, whatever works for you, whether it is exercise or just a little chat with a friend or getting some sun and air, you could do a bit of that, before you actually settled out to a task of listening to a longer technical talk. Next, building your own curiosity for the topic, which means finding out a little bit more about the topic on your own.

Or just jotting down brainstorming that which you can relate to from your prior knowledge related to the topic. Going about and researching a little bit about the author, their work, their interests, their approach to that topic, what are the perspectives they bring and do not bring, all of this will help you engage and stay engaged in the process of listening. A technical talk is of course as it evidently says, filled with a lot of technical knowledge and information.

It can become overwhelming and daunting. To stay focused and listen word by word by word by word. For some, it works to just catch the essential idea to catch the key concepts to look out for those with your own radar antenna and jot those down. To keep seeking those as you listen to the technical talk. For some, it might work.

Like it would work for me when I was in college, writing down every word verbatim, though it was a grueling task, I found that extremely helpful. So, find out what works for you to be able to get at the essence of what is the larger, what is the key, the core, the seed of this technical talk about. Search, jot down, note down, keywords, apart from the key concepts, and also doubts that may come up for you.

Because doubts or questions that come up for you, if unanswered can one irritate the mind and leave you stuck there with a doubt, so better to put it out park it somewhere where you know you can go back to it one. Second, sometimes just the act of putting it out, clarifies the answer in itself. And third, you know that your doubt and you need that answered by the end of the session or otherwise.

So, making space for your doubts as much as for what you understood. It is also going to be extremely helpful when will looking at longer technical talks that one is attempting to listen to. And needless to say, suppose it is a podcast, which you can listen at your own pace and time, you can pause and go back as many times whenever you wish to get all your clarifications before you go ahead.

Which of course would be difficult to do with a physical lecture, we do not have a pause button on the lecturer which is why in those cases, jotting down your questions and doubts would be useful, so you could go back to them for clarifications at the end. Listening to technical talks especially longer technical talks, it is certainly not an easy exercise.

Doing a little preparation, maybe even in terms of the knowledge base, the topic, the author, getting familiar with a few of the keywords, perhaps some definitions and terminologies could also come in handy. Look out for what is your style and what works for you. Some of this activity might kill curiosity for some, for others it is a great scaffolding and support when they step into such a listening exercise.

So see what works for you, do your preparation, do your note making and jotting down both concepts and doubts, and of course, at the end of it, do make time to review back. To summarise, to test for yourself, whatever it is that you have listened to get a sense of the larger picture, refresh your memory, restored it in your memory, evaluate for yourself the knowledge as well as the comprehension of that knowledge. With that, we come to the end of this episode on listening to longer technical talks. Thank you.