

## Lesson 27 – Sound

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Let's begin by looking at the difference between "sound" and "noise." Sometimes these words are interchangeable, but not always. A "sound" can be pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant – but "noise" is always either neutral or unpleasant.

- I woke up to the **lovely sound** of my wife playing the piano.  
(pleasant)
- I could hear the **soft sound** of their voices in the other room.  
(neutral)
- The fighting cats made **horrible screeching sounds**.  
(unpleasant)
- I can't hear you; there's a lot of **background noise**. Could you call me back?  
(neutral)
- My car is making an **annoying buzzing noise** whenever I turn on the A/C.  
(unpleasant)

If a noise or sound is very strong, we can describe it as a **loud sound/noise** – and if it is REALLY intense, then we can describe it as a **deafening sound/noise**. On the other hand, if we can barely hear it, then it is a **faint** or **soft sound/noise**. There's also a **muffled sound** – when it seems that something is blocking the sound.

Noise that doesn't stop is called **constant/incessant noise**. You'll hear this type of noise if your house is close to the highway, for example – you'll hear the **roar of traffic** day and night. If you work in a factory, then you might hear the **hum of machinery** all day long. And if you live next door to college students, you'll probably hear **music blaring** as they party every night.

Nature is full of noises, too – such as **birds chirping** and **dogs barking**. If you sit near the ocean, you can listen to the **waves crashing**. When you're in a remote, deserted area, you might hear the **wind whistling** through the trees. And if there's a storm, you'll hear the **rumble of thunder** – or be scared by a sudden thunderclap.

Now let's talk about the absence of sound. There's a difference between the words "quiet" and "silent." "Quiet" means that there is very little noise, whereas "silent" means there is no noise at all.

You can emphasize the totality of the silence by saying that it was **absolutely, completely, or perfectly silent**. When it begins to be silent, you can say that **silence descended** or **fell**, and then when a noise interrupts the silence, it **breaks** or **shatters the silence**.

It's also common to use collocations to give an emotional tone to the quiet/silence:

- The kids were **oddly/strangely/uncharacteristically quiet** (the fact that it is quiet is unusual, not normal)

- His joke about sex was followed by an **awkward/uncomfortable silence**. (the silence is due to embarrassment)
- After yelling at her brother, she lapsed into a **stony/sullen silence**. (the silence is due to anger)
- There was a **shocked/stunned silence** after the president announced his resignation. (the silence is due to extreme surprise)
- The city becomes **ominously/eerily quiet** after midnight. (the quiet is frightening and possibly dangerous)

## Lesson 27 Quiz

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1. A **high / loud / strong** noise woke me up from my nap.
2. His cell phone makes an **angering / annoying / incessant** noise every time he gets a text message.
3. I could tell Dan was still mad, as he glared at me in **stony / strange / stunned** silence.
4. I wasn't able to relax on the beach because some teenagers had a stereo with music **blaring / crashing / deafening**.
5. It was **extremely / hardly / perfectly** silent inside the old, abandoned house.
6. It's **eerily / oddly / sullen** quiet in that classroom - are the students taking a test?
7. My neighbor's dogs start **barking / chirping / whistling** whenever someone walks past their house.
8. She sang a lullaby **lightly / muffled / softly** to help put the baby to sleep.
9. The **complete / constant / long** noise in the office makes it difficult to concentrate.
10. The conversation on their first date was full of **awkward / ominous / uncharacteristic** silences.