

Activity 1: Podcasts

Level:

CEFR B2

Time:

60-90 minutes

Resources:

- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Smartboard
- ▶ Podcasts, if desired

Aims:

- ▶ To be able to follow the main events and the purposes of text, as assessed in Tasks 1 and 2 of the Level 1 Reading exam
- ▶ To raise learners' awareness of why and how the passive is sometimes used in texts
- ▶ To feel more confident when approaching new vocabulary in a text and to practise working out its meaning

Exam task focus: Task 1 and Task 2

Procedure

Note: This lesson would work particularly well if you have already used a podcast listening activity in your class (or do so regularly). If you haven't, consider using one of the BBC's excellent '6 Minute English' podcasts (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/6-minute-english>) – they come with very comprehensive worksheets and transcripts for you to download and print out. The BBC have several other series of short podcasts aimed at ESOL learners, so you could encourage your learners to choose one that appeals to them to listen to at home.

1. Tell learners they are going to focus on reading, and in particular the missing purpose and missing sentence questions they will encounter on the exam. These can feel like a bit of a jump to some learners coming up from Entry 3, where there are similar style questions. We'll also be looking at the use of the passive, which they might find in Level 1 Reading texts.
2. Set the context. Ask learners if they listen to podcasts. For the ones who do, what kind of thing do they listen to? If you haven't talked about podcasts previously, there are likely to be some members of the class who aren't really clear on what a podcast is, so get the ones who listen regularly to try and explain, and to share some recommendations on how best to get started.
3. Give out Handout activity 1 ('What's so great about podcasts?') and get them to think about what the bold words mean while they read. Once they've finished reading, they can complete the activity, matching the definition to the word.
4. Go through these and check the answers as a class – make sure everyone feels comfortable with each definition, allowing them to check in their own language at this stage if necessary.
5. Now ask them to look again at the same text and underline examples of the passive. Get them to compare their ideas in pairs and go through to check everyone is right.

Answers:

Podcasts are like radio shows, but they can be listened to at anytime and anywhere, usually through a smartphone or computer. They cover a wide range of topics, from broad subjects like news and history to very **niche** interests, like unusual hobbies or unique stories. But the best thing about them is that they are often made by ordinary people like you and me – and this means they **resonate with** listeners. Whether you like true crime, comedy, or self-improvement, there is likely to be a podcast that fits your taste.

Another big plus is that the show can be structured in any way the podcaster likes – they don't have to follow a strict **format** with the same things happening in the same order every time. Having said this, **consistency** can play a big role; one reason listeners become loyal to a particular podcast is that they feel they know what they're getting, and this provides a sense of comfort. And finally, new episodes are often released with regular frequency, making it easy for listeners to build a habit of tuning in.

6. Ask them, as a class, if they can see why the author chose to use the passive so many times here.

Reasons:

a) When you don't know the name, or don't have a name, for the person doing an activity, it's often easier to use the passive, and it can read better, too. Get them to re-write each of the sentences without the passive (you can do this together) – in most cases you need to invent a subject such as 'people' or 'he or she', and it is clearly a more clumsy construction.

b) It has the effect of making the podcast feel like the most important thing in the sentence. If you re-wrote all the sentences with 'people' or 'he or she' as above, the podcast would appear to be less important than the people. In this case, the author wanted to keep the focus very directly on the topic of the podcast.

c) It affects the level of formality by keeping the text somewhat impersonal – ask them how formal they think this text is (it's neutral). There are often questions about how formal a text is on the exam, and this is one of the clues they can look out for – informal texts will rarely be as packed full of examples of the passive as this short passage is.

7. Now tell them to imagine that the class is planning to make a podcast. In pairs, get them to brainstorm what kinds of decisions they will need to make together as a class about their new podcast before they get started. They can look at the text they've just read for some inspiration on this.
8. Take some class feedback on their ideas – it doesn't really matter what ideas they had (this will probably depend on how many podcast fans you have in the room), but hopefully all of the ideas will have primed them for the next activity, which is a longer reading task.
9. Give them Handout activity 2a. As they read the text, ask them to think about the purpose of each paragraph. If they had to give it a title, what would they choose? The title should reflect the purpose, in the way that many online articles do. They can refer to the previous text and vocabulary for some ideas, as well as think about the discussion they have just had.
10. Write the remaining 'real' titles on the board, in the following random order, and ask learners to decide which title matches which paragraph on their own, before comparing their answers with

a partner. Were they approximately right with their purposes? Did anyone get exactly the same title? (The answers to this activity are on Handout activity 2b, if you need to refer to it.)

Choose the format
Consider the frequency
Decide on a name
Select the length

11. Now give them Handout activity 2b. This is the same text, but with the 'official' titles in place. It's now clear that there was a missing sentence from each paragraph all along. Ask them to complete the missing sentences activity. They should consider both the purpose of the paragraph and the rest of the paragraph to help them decide. This will be more difficult than Entry 3, where they had to look for similar words to help them refer back to the topic sentence – by this level, the task is more nuanced. They'll need to consider the whole meaning of the paragraph. This is why it's so useful to always keep the purpose of the paragraph in mind.
12. Go through the answers (available below), allowing some time for consideration of why these were the best match. What kinds of clues did they find in the text to help them?
13. Finally, ask can find any examples of the passive in this text. There's only one (Your podcast can be solo-hosted...).
Write the following questions on the board (without the answers in brackets) and give your learners a couple of minutes to discuss them briefly with their partners, before taking feedback as a class:
 - ▶ Why has this writer chosen to use mostly active voice this time? (because the text is giving advice, so there is a subject every time – you).
 - ▶ What effect does this have on the reader? (it makes it feel more personal)
 - ▶ Is this text formal, neutral, or informal? (It's quite informal – certainly more so than the previous text, which was more neutral. This article has the tone of a friend offering help.)
14. If you have time here, you could round up the session by asking if anyone has ever made or appeared as a guest on a podcast, and / or by listening to the podcast suggested below.

Possible extra activity - if you haven't already, consider listening to an episode of 'The ESOL podcast' with your learners – there is a worksheet available on their website <https://esolpodcast.co.uk/> Ask your learners if they'd be interested in creating a podcast like this as a class project. If so, you could either create your own 'mock' podcast episode together as a class, or you could even contact the podcast creators – they are keen to hear from classes who wish to participate. You could get the learners to think about each of the aspects raised in the 'How to make a great podcast' text as a starting point.

Handout activity 1

What's so great about podcasts?

Podcasts are like radio shows, but you can listen to them any time and anywhere, usually through your smartphone or computer. They cover a wide range of topics, from broad subjects like news and history to very **niche** interests, like unusual hobbies or unique stories. But the best thing about them is that they are often made by ordinary people like you and me – and this means they **resonate with** listeners. Whether you like true crime, comedy, or self-improvement, there is likely to be a podcast that fits your taste.

Another big plus is that the show can be **structured** in any way the podcaster likes – they don't have to follow a strict **format** with the same things happening in the same order every time. Having said this, **consistency** can play a big role; one reason listeners become loyal to a particular podcast is that they feel they know what they're getting and it provides a sense of comfort. And finally, new episodes are often released with regular **frequency**, making it easy for listeners to build a habit of tuning in.

Write the word or phrase in bold from the text next to the definition you think is most likely:

Word: _____ **Meaning:** arranged or put together

Word: _____ **Meaning:** narrow, specific

Word: _____ **Meaning:** behaviour or performance that is always the same or similar

Word: _____ **Meaning:** the number of times something happens in a particular period

Word: _____ **Meaning:** have a personal impact on

Word: _____ **Meaning:** organisation, design

Handout activity 2a

Read the text below and think about the purpose of each paragraph. Invent a title for each section which summarises its purpose and write it on the line above. There is an example.

How to make a great podcast

Example: *__Pick your topic__*

It doesn't matter how niche this feels – maybe you love growing orchids? Or looking after guinea pigs? Or cooking with ginger? What about reading haiku poetry? Or writing it? Perhaps you're a fan of competitive puzzle solving, or painting models, or knitting dolls. Other people will love this hobby too and want to hear your experience. It makes them feel part of a community.

Title: _____

You need to choose something which resonates with listeners, but at the same time stands out as being unique so that it doesn't get lost in the sea of other podcasts out there. Think about the kinds of words your listeners will use to search for your podcast and try to include at least one of these so that people know what they are getting at first glance.

Title: _____

Although 44% of podcasts use an interview as the basis, that doesn't mean it's the best option. Your podcast can be solo-hosted – where you speak for the entire time – or co-hosted, which takes the pressure off. You can discuss news, or present a report, or use a documentary style. You could even have a script for a storytelling podcast. Remember, you don't have to use the same style for every episode, although this does provide consistency and can make it easier for you.

Title: _____

While over half of all podcasts last 30 minutes or more, maybe you should consider aiming for a shorter time, especially when you are starting out. Remember, a podcast is not like a radio show which needs to be exactly the same length each time, so it doesn't matter if you're a few minutes over or under your ideal time. But try to stick to a roughly similar length of time for each episode, or you'll start to annoy listeners. They like to know what to expect.

Title: _____

It doesn't matter if you release a new episode of your podcast daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly – just as long as your listeners know when it's coming. One option is to record a few episodes at once and schedule them to release at regular intervals, so you don't have to worry about running into problems or getting sick on the day you intended to post your podcast.

Handout activity 2b

Here is the text again, with the official titles in place. This time, we can see that the text is missing the first sentences. Can you use both the purpose and the clues in the rest of the paragraph to try and match the missing sentences to the numbered paragraph in the text?

How to make a great podcast

Pick your topic

.....1..... It doesn't matter how niche this feels – maybe you love growing orchids? Or looking after guinea pigs? Or cooking with ginger? What about reading haiku poetry? Or writing it? Perhaps you're a fan of competitive puzzle solving, or painting models, or knitting dolls. Other people will love this hobby too and want to hear your experience. It makes them feel part of a community.

Decide on a name

.....2..... You need to choose something which resonates with listeners, but at the same time stands out as being unique so that it doesn't get lost in the sea of other podcasts out there. Think about the kinds of words your listeners will use to search for your podcast and try to include at least one of these so that people know what they are getting at first glance.

Choose the format

.....3..... Although 44% of podcasts use an interview as the basis, that doesn't mean it's the best option. Your podcast can be solo-hosted – where you speak for the entire time – or co-hosted, which takes the pressure off. You can discuss news, or present a report, or use a documentary style. You could even have a script for a storytelling podcast. Remember, you don't have to use the same style for every episode, although this does provide consistency and can make it easier for you.

Select the length

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Consider the frequency

.....5..... It doesn't matter if you release a new episode of your podcast daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly – just as long as your listeners know when it's coming. One option is to record a few episodes at once and schedule them to release at regular intervals, so you don't have to worry about running into problems or getting sick on the day you intended to post your podcast.

Missing sentences:

- A Consistency is the key here.
- B Make sure the way you decide to structure your podcast works for you and for your topic.
- C The title of your podcast can make all the difference.
- D Start by thinking about what you're most interested in.
- E How long should your podcast be?

Handout activity 3

ANSWERS

How to make a great podcast

Pick your topic

Start by thinking about what you're most interested in. It doesn't matter how niche this feels – maybe you love growing orchids? Or looking after guinea pigs? Or cooking with ginger? What about reading haiku poetry? Or writing it? Perhaps you're a fan of competitive puzzle solving, or painting models, or knitting dolls. Other people will love this hobby too and want to hear your experience. It makes them feel part of a community!

Decide on a name

The title of your podcast can make all the difference. You need to choose something which resonates with listeners, but at the same time stands out as being unique so that it doesn't get lost in the sea of other podcasts out there. Think about the kinds of words your listeners will use to search for your podcast and try to include at least one of these so that people know what they are getting at first glance.

Choose the format

Make sure the way you decide to structure your podcast works for you and for your topic. Although 44% of podcasts use an interview as the basis, that doesn't mean it's the best option! Your podcast can be solo hosted – where you speak for the entire time – or co-hosted, which takes the pressure off. You can discuss news, or present a report, or use a documentary style. You could even have a script for a storytelling podcast. Remember, you don't have to use the same style for every episode, although this does provide consistency and can make it easier for you.

Select the length

How long should your podcast be? While over half of all podcasts last 30 minutes or more, maybe you should consider aiming for a shorter time, especially when you are starting out. Remember, a podcast is not like a radio show which needs to be exactly the same length each time, so it doesn't matter if you're a few minutes over or under your ideal time. But try to stick to a roughly similar length of time for each episode, or you'll start to annoy listeners. They like to know what to expect!

Consider the frequency

Consistency is the key here. It doesn't matter if you release a new episode of your podcast daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly – just as long as your listeners know when it's coming. One option is to record a few episodes at once and schedule them to release at regular intervals, so you don't have to worry about running into problems or getting sick on the day you intended to post your podcast.