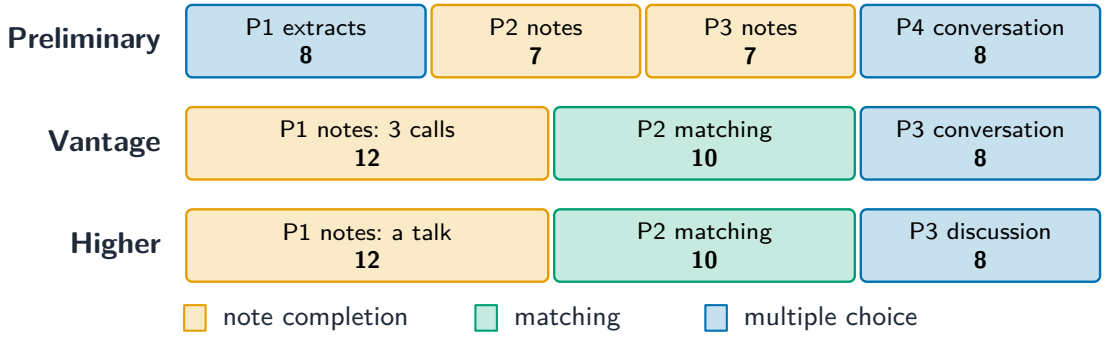
Listening: notes, matching and multiple choice

BEC Business English

What this topic covers

BEC Listening uses the sounds of working life: phone calls, voicemails, briefings, interviews and meetings. Every level has **30 questions** in about **40 minutes**, and you hear **every recording twice**. This topic shows each part, the skill it tests, and a routine for each task type.



Thirty questions at every level, in three or four parts

	Preliminary	Vantage	Higher
Note completion	Part 2: a phone call, **7** gaps · Part 3: a talk, **7** gaps	Part 1: **3** short calls, **4** gaps each	Part 1: a 2–3-minute talk, **12** gaps
Matching	–	Part 2: **2** × **5** short **monologues**, options A–H	Part 2: the same, **10** questions
Multiple choice	Part 1: **8** short **extracts** · Part 4: a conversation, **8** questions	Part 3: a conversation, **8** questions, A–C	Part 3: an interview or discussion, **8** questions, A–C
Copy answers	**5** minutes at the end	**10** minutes	**10** minutes

- Write on the **question paper** while you listen. At the end you get **transfer time** to copy your answers onto the answer sheet.

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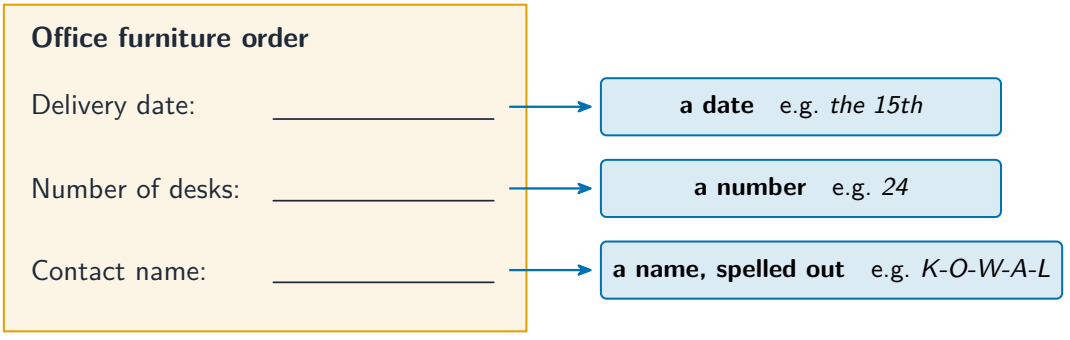
- The questions follow the **order** of the recording. If you miss one, let it go and listen for the next.

Note completion: predict, then listen

In **note completion** you fill gaps in notes, a form or a message. Before the recording starts, **predict** what kind of word fits each gap.



Know what kind of answer you need before you hear it

The note says	Predict
Delivery date: _____	a date: *the 14th*, *next Tuesday*
Price per unit: £ _____	a number: *2.50*
Contact: _____	a name: the speaker may **spell out** the letters
Problem with: the _____	a noun: *printer*, *invoice*

- **Preliminary:** answers are mostly numbers, dates, prices and names. **Vantage:** one or two words. **Higher:** up to three words.
- Write the words you **hear**. Don't change their form.
- Spelling must be correct, especially for a name the speaker spells out. Practise the English alphabet: *A, E, I* and *G, J* are the letters Chinese learners most often mix up.

The first answer is often wrong

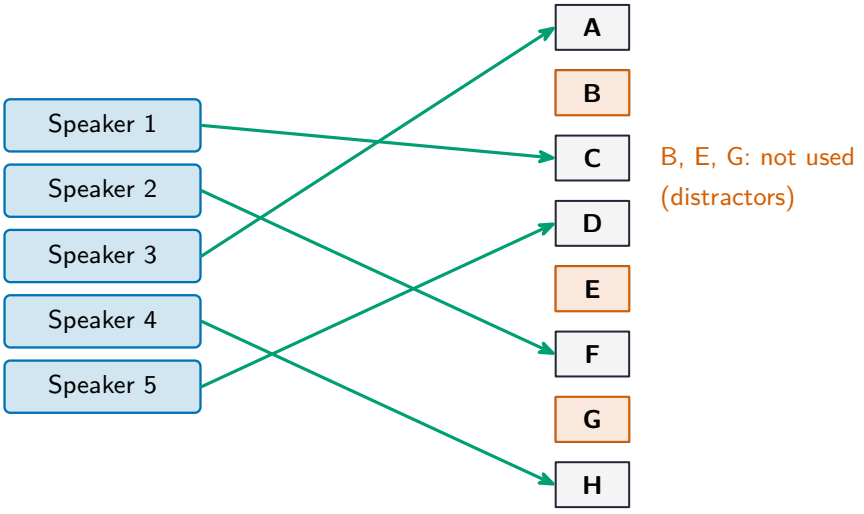
Speakers in business correct themselves. The recording often gives one answer, then changes it.

> *"The meeting is on the 14th… oh no, sorry, they moved it. It's the 16th now."*

- Answer: **16th**. The first number was a trap.
- Listen for words that change an answer: *actually*, *sorry*, *no*, *wait*, *they changed it*, *it was going to be…* *but*.

Matching: five speakers, eight options

In Vantage and Higher Part 2 you hear **five** short monologues, twice, and answer **two tasks** at the same time. Each task has **eight** options for five speakers, so three options are not used.



Five speakers, eight options: three are left over

- The speaker almost never says the option's words. Listen for the **gist** : the main point of what they say.
- A speaker who says *"price"* may be talking about service. The word match is the trap.
- First listening: note your best guess for each speaker in task one. Second listening: check task one and answer task two.

Multiple choice: follow the conversation

- Read the questions and options **before** the recording, and underline the key words.
- Listen for the speaker's **attitude** and opinion, not only facts: *"I'm not convinced"* means doubt; *"I couldn't agree more"* means strong agreement.
- Two speakers may disagree. Check **who** the question asks about.
- One option often repeats a word you hear but says something different. The correct option usually paraphrases.

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Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **-teen and -ty numbers.** *Fifteen* (fif-**TEEN**) and *fifty* (**FIF**-ty) sound close. Listen for the stress and the long *ee* at the end.
- △ **Writing a whole sentence.** The gap needs a word or two, not *"because the printer is broken"*.
- △ **Stopping after a missed answer.** One lost answer must not cost three more. Move on.
- △ **Forgetting to copy answers.** Answers on the question paper alone get no marks.

Try it

Cover the answers first.

1. A note says *Order number:* ____. What kind of answer do you predict?
2. You hear: *"The training's on Monday. No, wait, Tuesday, because Monday's a holiday."* What do you write?
3. You hear *"fifty"*, with the stress on *FIF*. Which number?
4. A Vantage note-completion gap allows one or two words. You hear *"the new photocopier in reception"*. Which words could fit *Problem with: the* ____?
5. Speaker 3 says: *"The products were fine, but whenever we called, nobody answered."* Which option: A low quality B poor customer service C high prices?
6. How many options are left unused in a Part 2 matching task?

Answers. 1 A **number** (perhaps with letters). 2 **Tuesday**. 3 **50**. 4 **photocopier** (or *new photocopier*). 5 **B**: nobody answered the phone. 6 **Three** (eight options, five speakers).

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Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. How many times do you hear each recording? – **Twice**.
2. How many questions are in BEC Listening? – **30**, at every level.
3. How long is the transfer time at Vantage? – **10 minutes** (5 at Preliminary).
4. What should you do before a note-completion recording starts? – **Predict** the kind of word for each gap.
5. In matching, why is a word you hear often a trap? – The answer is the **gist**, usually in different words.

Vocabulary card meanings

monologue: A long talk by one person. extract: A short part taken from a longer recording or text. transfer time: Extra time at the end of a listening test to copy answers onto the answer sheet. note completion: A task where you fill gaps in notes or a form with words you hear. predict: To say what you think will happen or come next. spell out: To say the letters of a word one by one. gist: The main idea of what someone says or writes. attitude: What a person thinks or feels about something.

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