Listening: stories, directions and opinions

English B1

What this topic teaches

B1 listening follows three currents: the **story** (who did what, in order), the **directions** (turn-by-turn, checked against a map in your head), and the **opinion** (what someone thinks, and how strongly). Each current has its own signals, and the signals are the listening.

- Stories are built of sequence words: first, then, after that, in the end.
- Directions are numbers plus turning words: go past, turn left, it is opposite.
- Opinions wear strength badges: I think, to be honest, I am not sure that.
- Memory hook: catch the **signposts**, not every word.

Stories: catch the sequence

A B1 story is a chain, and the chain has named links. When you hear a link, the next event is coming.

Signpost	What it promises
One day / Last summer	the story opens
then / after that	the next link
suddenly	a turn, often trouble
luckily / unfortunately	the speaker weighs the turn
in the end	the last link

- Listen with four fingers: WHO, WHERE, WHAT HAPPENED, HOW IT ENDED.
- Numbers in stories are anchors: dates, ages, amounts – write them down as you hear them.

> ■ **A first try**
>
> Catch the links: *Last month I visited my uncle. One evening we went fishing. Suddenly the boat engine stopped. Luckily a farmer pulled us in. In the end we got home at midnight, with two fish.*

Directions: build the map behind your eyes

Directions arrive as a walk; replay them as a picture. Turn words first, landmarks second, position words last.

Type	Words to catch
turning	turn left / right, take the second left, go straight on
landmarks	go past the school, until you reach the bridge
position	opposite the bank, next to, behind, on your left

- The final sentence usually names the destination and its neighbour: *The pharmacy is opposite the post office.*
- Numbers decide everything: the SECOND left is not the first; 200 metres is not two kilometres.

Opinions: catch the badge before the claim

B1 speakers announce opinions before they make them. The badge tells you how hard the claim will bite.

Badge	Strength
I think / I feel	a normal opinion
In my opinion / To be honest	a stronger one
I am not sure that / I doubt	a polite disagreement
Everybody knows	an opinion dressed as a fact - listen carefully

- After the badge comes the REASON (because, so) and often a second speaker's contrast (but, on the other hand).
- Agreement and disagreement are separate catches: *I see your point, but...* is a disagreement wearing a coat.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- Do not chase every word: the signposts carry the structure; the structure carries the meaning.
- Stressed words slow down around important news; the speaker is pointing.
- Numbers stay in your head for only seconds: write them the moment you hear them.

Check yourself

- Name the four fingers of story listening.
- Turn this into a picture: go straight, second left, past the school, opposite the bank.
- Badge strength: I doubt that vs everybody knows.
- Is *I see your point, but...* agreement or disagreement?