

# Spark Scoop

Alternative Learning Center



## Welcome 2021!

Spark is so excited to begin 2021! The new year holds many opportunities for our students to continue their incredible learning journey together. Spark has plans for several upgrades to our program, including new staff, new classes and more space. Soon, we will have an additional classroom! This change is the next step in our growth process – leading to a move into a new larger space for our center. New classes being considered include more fashion design courses, photography, travel & cultural studies and, of course, more language arts, math and core curricula. Let us all be grateful to have come through the year 2020 relatively unscathed by the global pandemic and the resulting economic recession experienced around the world. We will continue our efforts providing excellent alternative education to each of our students and a productive partnership with our learning community. We look forward to working together with you to grow your child's knowledge, skills, creativity and critical thinking. Happy New Year from Spark!

1

### Designed By Me Too!

Welcome to the world of fashion design! 8-week course understanding styles / colors & learning from masters to explore new fashion frontiers. Students will bring their designs to life!

2

### Dare I Go

Virtual travel to: Lebanon, India, French Polynesia, Spain, Morocco, & Mexico! Experience food, music, culture, and histories of these amazing countries!

3

### I Can Speak!

From the ABC's to the 123's: Designed for young children and focused on the learning alphabet, basic sight words, phonics, phrases & counting!

Adaptive Pre K-12



Curriculum  
Full American  
Curriculum delivered  
both on-line & in  
person through our  
innovative teaching  
program

IELTS



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website at : [IELTS](#)

Enterprise City Jr.



Based on the success  
of Enterprise City I &  
II, we have created  
this Junior edition for  
kids 7-10!

# Essential Listening: Not Just for English Learners

JANUARY 1, 2021

There are many difficulties we find our students facing in understanding a talk, lecture or conversation in a second language (sometimes in their native language). The speaker, the situation and the listener can all be the cause of these difficulties. While the challenges posed by the speaker or the situation may be out of the listener's hands, we wanted to share a strategies you can use to make your listening skills more effective.

We have included a link to a good TedTalk by Julian Treasure on the difficulties and the importance of listening. We recommend you use this video in conjunction with the recommendations within this article to both practice and improve your personal listening skills.

**Weblink: TedTalk 5 Ways to Listen Better.** *About: In our louder and louder world, says sound expert Julian Treasure, "We are losing our listening." In this fascinating talk, Treasure shares five ways to re-tune your ears for conscious listening -- to other people and the world around you.*

## Predicting Content

First, imagine you've just turned on your TV. You see a man in a suit standing in front of a large map with the symbols of a sun, clouds and thunder. What do you imagine he is about to tell you? Most likely, this is going to be a weather forecast. You can expect to hear words like 'sunny', 'windy' and 'overcast'. You'll probably hear the use of the future tense: 'It'll be a cold start to the day'; 'there'll be showers in the afternoon', etc.

Depending on the context - a news report, a lecture, or an exchange in a supermarket - you can often predict the kind of words and style of language the speaker will use. Our knowledge of the world helps us anticipate the kind of information we are likely to hear. Moreover, when we predict the topic of a talk or a conversation, all the related vocabulary stored in our brains is 'activated' to help us better understand what we're listening to.

## Listening for the Central Idea

Suppose you are a superhero flying in the sky. From that height, it is possible to see what the entire area is like, how densely populated it is, the kind of houses in each area. When listening, it is also possible to get the 'whole picture' but with one crucial difference: information comes in a sequence. And in that sequence of information, there are content words (the nouns, adjectives and verbs) that can help you form that picture. We often call this listening for gist (or listening for the central idea).

For example, the words 'food', 'friends', 'fun', 'park' and 'sunny day' have their own meanings, but when you hear the words in sequence, they help form the context of a picnic.



Private Lessons



English Saturday



Designed by Me



English Saturday

Just like the traffic lights on roads, there are signposts in language that help us follow what we're listening to. These words, which link ideas, help us to understand what the speaker is talking about and where they are taking us. They're particularly important in presentations and lectures. For example, if a university lecturer says: 'I am going to talk about three factors affecting global warming...' then later on you might hear the phrases 'first of all', 'moving on to' and 'in summary' to indicate the next part of the talk. Other words and phrases can function in a similar way. For instance, to clarify ('in other words', 'to put it another way'); to give examples ('to illustrate this', 'for example'), and so on. Take a look at this list of phrases for more examples.

## Listening for Details

Imagine you are a detective taking a closer look at those buildings you saw earlier on as a superhero. This time, rather than taking in the big picture, you're looking for something specific and rejecting anything that does not match what's on your list.

Similarly, when listening for details, you are interested in a specific kind of information – perhaps a number, name or object. You can ignore anything that does not sound relevant. In this way, you are able to narrow down your search and get the detail you need. In a listening test, if you are asked to write down the age of a person, listen for the words related to age ('old', 'young', 'years', 'date of birth', etc.) or a number that could represent that person's age. If it is a conversation, you might wait to hear someone beginning a question with 'How old...?'

## Inferring Meaning

Imagine you are a tourist in a country whose language you do not speak. In a restaurant, you hand over a credit card to pay for the bill, but the server seems to say something apologetic in response. Even though you don't understand his words, you can probably conclude that the restaurant doesn't take credit cards, and you need to pay with cash instead. This is the technique of inferring meaning: using clues and prior knowledge about a situation to work out the meaning of what we hear.

Similarly, we can infer the relationship between people from the words they use, without having to find out directly. Take the following conversation:

A: Tom, did you do your homework?

B: I did, sir, but the dog ate it.

A: That's a terrible excuse. You'll never pass the exams if you don't work harder.

We can infer from the use of the words 'homework' and 'exams' that this is a conversation between a student and his teacher. By using contextual clues and our knowledge of the world, we can work out what's being said, who is speaking and what's taking place.



### Our Reader of the Month!

Vi Dieu may only be three years old, but she is tiny bundle of focus and determination. Vi Dieu not only knows her alphabet both phonetically and by sight, but she is reading at the pre-K level. Vi Dieu loves to read, play with anything creatively and she adores music (especially Michael Bolton). We love watching and teaching this gifted little sprout and getting the opportunity to "bop" along side this girl. Good Job Vi Dieu! Please help us congratulate our READER of the MONTH!

## What we've been up to...

Our **Pre-K** group has been working hard to put sight words into use through reading as well as continuing to practice alphabetic letter and sound recognition. They have been increasing sight words to include: I, A, See, Look, Cat, Dog and They. Our Pre-K kiddos are successfully reading two books on their own, "Favorite Colors" and "Count with Me". We have continued to work on sound blending & segmentation.

Our **1st & 2nd grade** has been working on rhyming and silent letters (such as: comb, write, and kneel). This month, some of our kids have finished Geronimo Stilton "Singing Sensation" and have begun the next book in the series "The Giant Diamond Robbery". It is an excellent book that is really pushing our vocabulary and giving us plenty to talk about. In math, we have begun our unit on patterns, multi-step addition / subtraction as well as place values!

Our **3rd, 4th & 5th** graders have finished the final book in the series "Out of Time". A book about time travel throughout history. We have started a challenging writing series that is helping to develop our grammar and written communication skills. We have focused on places we want to see and things we would like to do. Our writing practice has also given us an opportunity to improve our handwriting!

Our **6th grade** is continuing to work through our very challenging unit on Biology. We have been learning about the components that make up life, scientific experimentation as well as experimental design. We are continuing our unit on Social and Emotional Development which has included deep discussions on healthy relationships, the development of our strengths, asking for help, having a positive attitude and problem solving through both creative and root-cause analysis.

Our **High School** students have now completed or are nearly complete with mid-term exams and practice IELTS testing. Our students are doing exceedingly well on their exams and we are so proud of their hard work and continued dedication! We have two students that received highest marks in their grades for English! We also have three students that have achieved scores of 9.0 on their IELTS practice exams.

Our **Art** students have been busy being creative and exploring color, texture and depth! We have focused this month on messy, hands on creating and making craft related projects. Our little artists have created Papier-mâché bowls, animal themed masks and customized tube pencil holders.

## Class Updates

**Art:** Our art class has one opening. See class schedule for dates and details.

**Designed By Me Too!** This class has been created in response to the success of our first (much shorter) trial class. Designed for kids 7 - 13 years old, this class takes students into the world of fashion design. 8-week course teaches how to create mood boards, understanding styles and colors and learning from masters to explore new fashion frontiers. Students will bring three of their designs to life! Parents are invited to attend the end of class fashion show!

## Classes:

- Candy Quest Coding
  - Introduce your child to visual programming. Students learn basic programming, animated design, and mini-game creation. Students work on coding puzzles, build their own projects, and take quizzes. Designed for kids 7-12 years old, this class teaches block coding and is packed with fun and creative puzzle modules. Session three begins January 2021 (space is limited). For more information visit: [Candy Quest Coding](#)

## Coming soon:

- Vietnamese conversation for beginners
- Cooking Class for Adults
- Cooking for Children
- Toastmaster's Kids (public speaking and confidence building)
- Mr. and Miss Manner's

Email us at: [info@Spark-vn.com](mailto:info@Spark-vn.com) for more information or register in advance!

## Class Schedule

Private and e-learning (distance learning) classes available upon request.

Class	Days	Time	Links
Art	M, W, F	5:30-6:30 PM	<a href="#">Register Now!</a>
English Basics	M-F	5:00-5:30 PM	<a href="#">Waitlist</a>
Adaptive Curriculum	M-F	3:00-5:00 PM	<a href="#">More Info!</a>
IELTS	M-F	6:30-7:30 PM	<a href="#">IELTS</a>
Designed by Me Too!	Sat	1:30-3:30 PM	<a href="#">Register Now!</a>
Intensive English	Sat / Sun	See link for times	<a href="#">Intensive English</a>

## New Year Schedule

January 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 ★	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

★ Indicates No Classes

February 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7					12 ★	13 ★
14 ★	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27

★ Indicates No Classes