

# The difference between listen and hear

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Do you get confused when it comes to using “listen” and “hear”? Although, they may appear to be the same, but they are two different words with two different meanings. It’s time to understand the basic difference between the two. When your ear receives any sound, which is noted by the brain, then it means you have heard it. Whereas, when you make a conscious effort to hear something, it is referred to as listening. Still confused? Let’s go with an explanation followed by examples.

## Listen

Listen (verb) means to pay attention to the sounds coming into your ears, or to make an effort to hear someone or something.



## Example:

- Are you listening to him?
- Are you paying attention to him?

Therefore, Listen = Pay attention

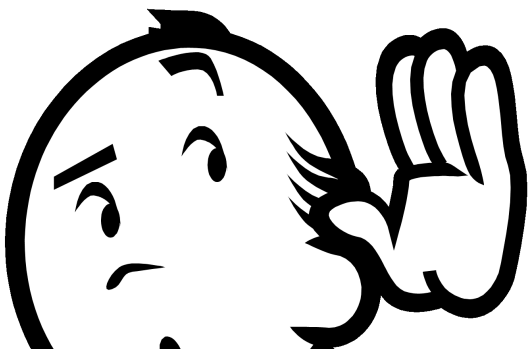
- We listened carefully to the Prime Minister’s speech.

When listen has an object you use “to” – You “listen to” something or someone.

## Example:

1. I like listening TO music!
2. She is listening TO you!
3. Listen TO me!
4. Do you like to listen to songs?

Here, in the above examples, you will find “to” with the object. You can’t write listen me or do you like listen song. Listen is often used with to.



want to listen to the sound but your ear will hear the sound, whether you want to or not.

1. Can you hear me?
2. I heard a noise outside.
3. My grandfather is getting old. She can't hear very well.
4. What did you say? I can't hear you. You'll have to speak up.

**Hear can also be used to talk about the result of listening or when you want to talk about something you experienced or listened to:**

1. I hear what you're saying but I don't agree with you (means I've just finished listening to you)
2. I heard a great song on the radio yesterday (means I was listening to the radio yesterday)

**When talking about news that you have heard, read, or seen on TV, you can use hear with a (that) clause:**

1. I hear (that) you're expecting a baby.
2. I hear (that) you've bought a new house.

One important thing that you must notice is 'hear' can be used in place of 'listen' sometimes, but 'listen' cannot be used in place of 'hear'.

Hence, if you are learning English, then focus on these words to improve your spoken English skills. You can join an [online spoken English course](#) to learn in-depth about these concepts.

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**-By Shailja Varma**

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