

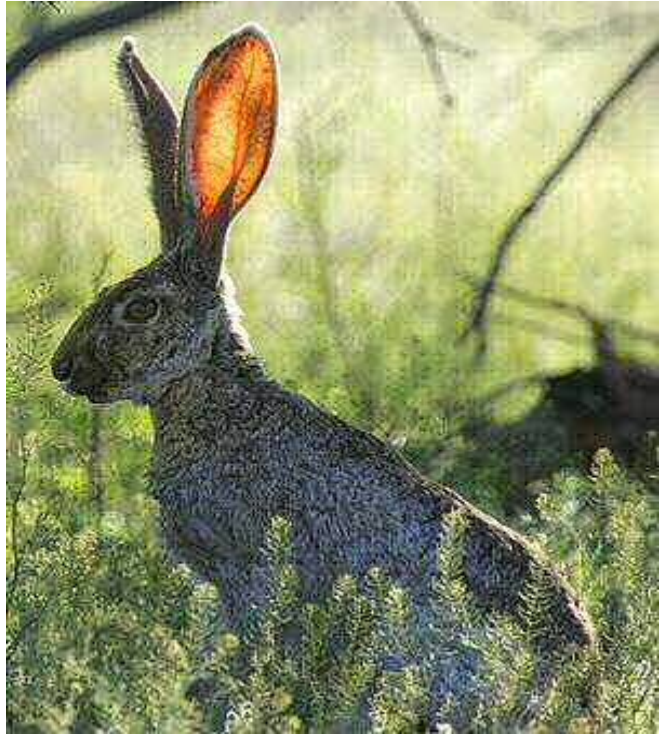
# A2 English Listening Practice: TED talks on Hope

TED.com offers great English listening practice, with well over 1,000 interesting, clear talks on many subjects. However, most are best for intermediate or advanced English learners. This pdf links to 7 TED talks easy enough for A2 (high beginner) English students, with questions to help you focus listening and to discuss or write responses.

For the first three talks, there is a brief introduction and some comprehension questions to answer after the first and second time listening to each talk. (It helps to listen at least twice—first for the main idea and then for more details.) Pause each talk whenever necessary.

Before each of these talks, have a brief class discussion using the questions below to ‘activate prior knowledge’ and create interest.

The pass out the listening worksheet, go over the introduction to the talk with the class, and present the video.



**For Listening Practice 1:** How do you react to difficulty and failure? Are you willing to work harder with the hope of doing better? Does it help? Can you change that ‘C’ into an ‘A’ if you keep studying?

**For Listening Practice 2:** Have you heard of the Taliban, a rebel group in Afghanistan? What do you know about them? (If not mentioned in the class discussion, point out that they usually forbid education for women.)

**For Listening Practice 3:** What do you know about the International Red Cross? What are some of the services they provide? What services do you think are so important that they need to operate even in a war zone with active fighting?

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There are four more talks with a question or two each to think or write about. All of these talks are related. They are about hope: about people caring for each other, overcoming violence, and helping others reach their full potential. You can start with any of them by clicking the links in the list below.

(Click on first letter of links to activate them.)

## English Listening Practice 1: Hope for Personal Change

[http://www.ted.com/talks/carol\\_dweck\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_believing\\_that\\_you\\_can\\_improve?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en)

(11 min.)

Did you know that trying something difficult for you can actually make new connections in your brain? Carol Dweck presents research that people's beliefs about their abilities affect how much they can improve. Those who believe abilities are fixed (a person is either good at something or not, smart or not) make very different choices than those who believe they can get better with effort and practice.

### After listening for the first time, circle the best answer:

1. A 'growth mindset' means understanding that

- A. we can develop our abilities and intelligence; they are not set forever at a certain level.
- B. our abilities can grow a certain amount but are mostly fixed at birth.
- C. our bodies and minds grow until we become adults.
- D. we need to grow up and act like responsible adults.

### After listening for the second time:

2. In one high school, when students did not pass a test they received a grade of "not yet" instead of 'F.' The speaker likes this, because it helps students understand that

- A. that test wasn't really important.
- B. it's O.K. to fail.
- C. some people just aren't good at taking tests.
- D. they can keep studying and pass it next time.

3. (Choose all the answers that are true.) Students with a 'fixed mindset' were more likely to

- A. believe if they failed at something they would never be good at it.
- B. believe if they failed at something or made many errors they needed to practice it more.
- C. avoid difficult tasks because they feared looking like 'failures.'
- D. look for others who did worse than they did so they could at least feel superior to them.

4. When researchers taught students that learning difficult new things helped them make more connections in their brains, and get smarter over time,

- A. students were disappointed they didn't immediately feel smarter.
- B. students decided studying was too much work.
- C. students were more willing to keep trying, and their grades went up.
- D. students started getting all 'As.'

Bonus question to think about, write about or discuss with someone: Dweck suggests that we can help children develop a growth mindset by praising their effort and improvement rather than their talents or intelligence (which they may feel they can't change.) How important do you think this is?

## Practice 2: Education: Taking Risks for a Better Future

[http://www.ted.com/talks/sakena\\_yacoobi\\_how\\_i\\_stopped\\_the\\_taliban\\_from\\_shutting\\_down\\_my\\_school?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/sakena_yacoobi_how_i_stopped_the_taliban_from_shutting_down_my_school?language=en) 17 min.

Sakena Yacoobi's father sent her to the U.S. so she could become a doctor and help save lives. After Russia invaded Afghanistan, her family became refugees, and she was able to bring them to safety in the U.S. However, her heart was still in Afghanistan. She went back to see what she could do to help. Listen to her story and think about how she decided to help her people.

After listening for the first time:

1. While visiting in the refugee camps, what did Yacoobi decide was the best way to help? Why?
  - A. As a doctor, she could care for maternal and child health and save lives.
  - B. As a doctor, she could help people who had been wounded during the fighting.
  - C. By opening schools for girls she could give her people confidence and a way to support their families and move forward.
  - D. By opening girls' schools she could help them forget their worries and become better wives.

After listening for the second time:

2. Once 19 young men with rifles stopped Sakena Yacoobi's car. What did they want?

- A. They wanted to kill her because she was educating girls.
- B. They wanted her to stop educating girls.
- C. They wanted her to pay them a lot of money.
- D. They wanted her to educate them too.

3. What did she do about it?

- A. After they let her go she never went back there again.
- B. With the help of donors she started classes for young men too.
- C. When she left she called for military help.
- D. She gave each of them money to go to school.

4. What has happened to those young men since then?

- A. They have attacked other educators.
- B. They got educated and have become her supporters and protectors.
- C. They have joined the Taliban.
- D. They have grown up and started businesses.

Bonus question to think about, write about or discuss with someone: Do you agree with Sakena Yacoobi about the value of education to completely change people's attitudes and lives? Explain why or why not, discussing the types of change education can or cannot cause.

## Practice 3: Hope from Not Giving Up

[http://www.ted.com/talks/alberto\\_cairo\\_there\\_are\\_no\\_scraps\\_of\\_men](http://www.ted.com/talks/alberto_cairo_there_are_no_scraps_of_men) 19 min.

Alberto Cairo worked for the Red Cross as a physical therapist providing prostheses (artificial arms or legs) for Afghans disabled by the war. At first, the factory closed whenever the war got too close. Something changed that. Listen to the story the first time to find out why they changed that policy. What made them decide that keeping their rehabilitation center open was a priority, even in the war zone?

After listening for the first time:

1. What made the Red Cross decide that helping disabled people was a priority, even when there was fighting nearby?

- A. The government started to provide protection to the Red Cross.
- B. They got more donations.
- C. They saw the risks disabled people were willing to take to get help.
- D. They didn't have any other work to do.

After listening for the second time:

2. What did Mahmoud and other disabled Afghan men ask for? They wanted dignity and

- A. a chance to work to support themselves.
- B. better, stronger prostheses.
- C. protection from the war.
- D. help for their families.

3. Why did the factory making prostheses—artificial limbs—start practicing “positive discrimination,” hiring disabled people whenever possible?

- A. They learned that even people with major disabilities could manage to do their jobs well.
- B. They didn't have to pay as much to disabled people.
- C. Seeing other disabled people working was a source of hope for people needing prostheses.
- D. Both A and C.

Bonus question to think about, write about or discuss with someone:

Cairo said he didn't feel Mahmoud could keep up with the work of making prostheses with only one real arm and no legs, but they found Mahmoud even speeded up production, because he wanted to prove himself able to work.

Have you ever had an experience in which someone questioned your ability and you worked exceptionally hard to prove you could do it? If not, do you know someone else who has proved himself (or herself) in spite of great difficulties?

## More Hopeful A2 TED Talks for English Listening Practice

I found each of these talks outstanding. Listen to them, looking for answers to the questions connected with each talk. (These are not easy questions to answer in English, but think about them.) Then listen again, or read the transcript to deepen your understanding of their stories and build English vocabulary and fluency.

1. [http://www.ted.com/talks/joseph\\_kim\\_the\\_family\\_i\\_lost\\_in\\_north\\_korea\\_and\\_the\\_family\\_i\\_gained](http://www.ted.com/talks/joseph_kim_the_family_i_lost_in_north_korea_and_the_family_i_gained) (Have you ever had to leave people you loved without knowing when you would see them again? This story may be too painful for some refugees who have faced similar trauma.) 14 min.
2. [http://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_lindsey\\_curating\\_humanity\\_s\\_heritage?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_lindsey_curating_humanity_s_heritage?language=en) (What does Lindsey want to preserve? What does she fear will be lost to humanity? What does she mean when she says this planet is our canoe and that we must work together?) 10 min.
3. [http://www.ted.com/talks/scilla\\_elworthy\\_fighting\\_with\\_non\\_violence?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/scilla_elworthy_fighting_with_non_violence?language=en) (Elworthy says it is often more effective to fight bullying and violence with nonviolence. Can you give an example? What skills can help?)\* 16 min.
4. [http://www.ted.com/talks/9\\_11\\_healing\\_the\\_mothers\\_who\\_found\\_forgiveness\\_friendship?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/9_11_healing_the_mothers_who_found_forgiveness_friendship?language=en). (What brought these mothers together and helped them understand each other in spite of language and cultural differences?) 9.5 min.

\* #3 See her example of American bombings of terrorist targets increasing terrorist numbers. Skills include self-understanding, dealing with fear and controlling anger—using it as a fuel.

You can find TED talks for all levels, ranked by level and speed and with English listening practice exercises, at [lingorank.com](http://lingorank.com) <http://lingorank.com/talks/>.

(See next page for answers.)

# English Listening Practice Answers

## English Listening Practice 1: Hope for Personal Change

1. A 'growth mindset' means understanding that

> A. we can develop our abilities and intelligence; they are not set forever at a certain level.

2. In one high school, when students did not pass a test they received a grade of "not yet" instead of 'F.' The speaker likes this, because it helps students understand that

> D. they can keep studying and pass it next time.

3. (Choose all the answers that are true.) Students with a 'fixed mindset' were more likely to

> A. believe if they failed at something they would never be good at it.

> C. avoid difficult tasks because they feared looking like 'failures.'

> D. look for others who did worse than they did so they could at least feel superior to them.

4. When researchers taught students that learning difficult new things helped them make more connections in their brains, and get smarter over time,

> C. students were more willing to keep trying, and their grades went up.

## Practice 2: Education: Taking Risks for a Better Future

1. While visiting in the refugee camps, what did the speaker decide was the best way she could help in Afghanistan, and why?

> C. By opening schools for girls she could give her people confidence and a way to support their families and move forward.

2. Once 19 young men with rifles stopped Sakena Yacoobi's car. What did they want?

> D. They wanted her to educate them too.

3. What did she do about it?

> B. With the help of donors she started classes for young men too.

4. What has happened to those young men since then?

> B. They got educated and have become her supporters and protectors.

### Practice 3: Hope from Not Giving Up

1. What made the Red Cross decide that helping disabled people was a priority, even when there was fighting nearby?

> C. They saw the risks disabled people were willing to take to get help.

2. What did Mahmoud and other disabled Afghan men ask for? They wanted dignity and

> A. a chance to work to support themselves.

3. Why did the factory making prostheses—artificial limbs—start practicing “positive discrimination,” hiring disabled people whenever possible?

A. They learned that even people with major disabilities could manage to do their jobs well.

C. Seeing that other disabled people could work was a source of hope to the people who came to get prostheses.

> D. Both A and C.

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