

GA LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN ESOL INTERNATIONAL LISTENING RECORDING TRANSCRIPTS – Sample 3

Listening Task 1:

SPEAKER	MALE / FEMALE	ACCENT
Presenter James	Male	Standard English
Helen	Female	Standard English

Presenter: Today we'll be talking about arachnophobia – the fear of spiders. A big welcome to our guest Helen Sykes, who has successfully overcome her fear of arachnids. Helen, tell us, have you been afraid of spiders all your life?

Helen: Well, James, I've always loathed creepy-crawlies – as a child I tried to sleep under the bed to avoid spiders dropping on me from the ceiling. I can't even comfortably look at a photo of one. But the moment I knew my spider phobia was out of control was when I turned down a friend's invitation to Australia purely because I was terrified about coming into contact with huge arachnids.

P: I know that many of our listeners might be surprised to hear that, but you are not alone Helen. It's estimated that in Western societies, as many as 55 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men feel some degree of arachnophobia. Did you know that in the UK it's one of the most common phobia?

H: No, I didn't know the exact statistics, but I can't say I'm surprised... but I have learnt that apparently it has an evolutionary basis – avoiding potentially venomous spiders would have been a very useful instinct for our ancestors....

P: Well, one might say that in the 21st century, it would be much more beneficial if we were terrified of crisps...

H: That's an excellent point, James! (laughing...) You're spot on there... But evolution certainly hasn't caught up in my case. There was the time I was in the bath and a spider ran along the bathroom shelf – I screamed so much that it fell into the bath with me! Another time, a bereaved friend phoned me for consolation when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a great hairy thing tiptoeing across the floor. I dropped the phone on my sobbing friend!

P: It does sound like some serious fear, Helen. It must've gotten to a point when you were really fed up with it?

H: Oh yes, you could say so! Thoroughly fed up!

P: So how come you never went looking for help?

H: Who says I didn't? I tried to do it on my own, watching nature programmes about spiders on the TV. Then London Zoo started to offer a 'friendly spider' programme, involving group hypnosis aimed at desensitising arachnophobics. I once made it to the front gate of the zoo and went back home paralysed with fear. In the end, my husband put me in touch with a neuro-linguistic programming expert, David Shephard, who claims to be able to cure any phobia in just one or two hours.

P: Neuro linguistic programming, by the way, is a fairly controversial therapy invented in the seventies, and it uses a series of techniques that enable you to take control of your brain to dispel irrational fears...

H: That's right, James. The first thing David did was analyse my fear. He wanted to know if I was only afraid of the real thing, or also the image, and that sort of thing... He was asking me a series of silly questions, such as if I'd be afraid of a spider if it was offering me flowers... or wearing stilettoes...

J: That sounds interesting...

H: The second thing David wanted to do is try to establish exactly when my fear began. I was supposed to think back to a time in my life when I wasn't afraid of spiders, but honestly James, I could not think of such a time!

J: So what are you saying here Helen? Were you born with the fear of spiders?

H: Well, that was David's conclusion. And, to be honest, at that stage I thought the whole process was ludicrous... but I just went along with it...I guess I didn't have that much to lose by staying till the end of the session.

J: So what happened next? Did he make you touch a spider?

H: Well, not quite...David asked me to think back as far as I could remember in my life, and release the emotions I felt towards spiders at various encounters. And you know what? I thought about the spider in the bath and I felt sorry for it!

J: The spider that fell into your bath when you screamed the house down? (*incredulously*)

H: That's right. That's when I began to realise that the session started to make a difference... And when I admitted that, David told me that he had a tarantula brought in by a zoologist, and he wanted me to hold it in my hand! I agreed to peek into the box, and saw a large tarantula. Apparently her name was Rosie and she was a Chilean rose tarantula...

J: That sounds like amazing progress...what happened next?

H: Well, to cut a long story short, at the end of the session I was holding the spider in my hand!

J: That's an amazing result, Helen, well done!

H: I know James, thank you... At home later that day, I tested myself on a garden spider. The revulsion had gone. And I felt quite indifferent to it. I still won't be keeping any as pets, but at least we can co-exist. And if any more fall into my bath, I'll do my best to rescue them – not scream the house down.*(laughing)*

Listening Task 2:

SPEAKER	MALE / FEMALE	ACCENT
NASA engineer	Male	Standard English

Does everyone remember the images of the first human footprints on the Moon? It's something that's stayed with me all this time, and now I'm looking forward to seeing the first human footprints on the surface of Mars. As a lead engineer with NASA, I've worked on the robotic exploration of Mars for the past few years. Now, I'm looking to the future and want to explain to you all today what we mean when we talk about humans establishing a sustainable presence on Mars.

Today, we can only study other planets like Mars from a distance. Our robots have already been on and around Mars for 40 years. We've taken every opportunity to send orbiters, landers, and rovers to conduct increasingly complex experiments using high-tech sensing systems. These robots have returned vital data about the Martian environment, helping us understand what challenges we may face and what resources we may find. One of the experiments involved lowering a rover called Curiosity onto the surface of the planet. Curiosity weighs nearly one metric ton, which is about the weight of a small car. The experiment was successful, but we need to be able to land at least 10 times that weight when we land humans. So we need to continue experimenting with heavier weights before the launch of the first manned spacecraft.

Landing a human on the Red Planet would be far trickier than landing a robot because of the speed at which you need to enter the atmosphere. For instance, our latest rover hit the Martian atmosphere at 15 times the acceleration of gravity: 15G. In simple terms, 15 G means very, very fast! Traveling at such extreme speeds would be disastrous for humans as it could severely affect our bodies: for example, our retinas would detach from our eyes.

But those challenges don't mean that we shouldn't keep trying and right now, we're closer than ever. Before we start our journey to Mars, we need to complete three stages, each with its own increasing challenges as humans move further from Earth. Let us remember that space is a dangerous, unfriendly place. Astronauts are isolated from family and friends, and confined to a small space. They are also exposed to radiation that could increase their lifetime risk of cancer, have to eat a diet high in freeze-dried food, and must exercise daily to keep their muscles and bones from deteriorating.

So, in the first stage, which we call 'Earth Reliant exploration', we've started doing more advanced research aboard the International Space Station. From this world-class microgravity laboratory, we're testing technologies and advancing human health and performance. This research will enable humans to safely undertake long duration missions into space.

In the 2nd stage, or what we've named the 'Proving Ground' stage, NASA will learn to conduct complex operations in a space environment that allows crews to return to Earth in a matter of days. Primarily operating around the moon, my NASA colleagues will undertake a

series of activities, transporting freight and testing crew safety procedures, all while still being able to return to Earth quickly and easily.

Once we're at the stage where we can start to apply this new knowledge to Mars, Stage 3 will consist of Earth independent activities, which should enable human missions to the Mars' vicinity. We think it's likely we'll begin with a low-Mars orbit or orbits of one of the Martian moons, before eventually being able to land on the Martian surface. Of course, we're talking about perhaps 20 years from now and we may find that more research will be needed before we can finally walk on the surface of Mars. Nevertheless, any future Mars mission will require a collaborative effort and, if successful, will represent a global achievement.

Maybe in our lifetime humanity will be able to answer some of the fundamental questions about life beyond Earth: was Mars home to microbial life? Is it today? Could it be a safe home for humans? What can it teach us about life elsewhere in the cosmos? Or how life began on Earth? What can it teach us about Earth's past, present and future?

The journey to Mars is a historic pioneering endeavour, and I'm certainly looking forward to getting started! Now, if I can take your questions....

Listening Task 3:

SPEAKER	MALE / FEMALE	ACCENT
Speaker 1	Male	Standard English
Speaker 2	Male (young, student)	Standard English
Speaker 3	Female	Standard English

Speaker 1: Should we welcome driverless cars?

I think the driverless car is definitely an idea which could change the world for the better! They'd very quickly do away with the hazards of people drinking, texting, speeding and doing whatever dangerous things cause the most accidents on our roads today. And that's got to be a powerful reason to give them a go. As I understand it, a huge amount of investment has gone into developing the technology already. Think of the safety benefits... we could potentially avoid tens of thousands of road traffic accidents every year. I mean, maybe even hundreds of thousands... At this moment in time nobody can say exactly how many lives would be saved in the future but the exact number is almost irrelevant because we know that it would be many. And we also know that human error is the key cause of fatalities at the moment. So any kind of technology that is available to eliminate it, it's got to be worth investing in.

Speaker 2:

Oh, I have a serious objection to this. Year after year, these technology giants introduce more and more technology into our lives, with no thought for real privacy or safety. Big corporations are only interested in one thing: making as much money as possible. They'll tell us anything so we spend our cash on the latest gimmick. I think it's the government that should be leading these advances. Technology supporting driverless cars should be thoroughly and objectively tested, and put through strict safety inspections. We have government experts we trust to work in the best interests of the public, so why not put them in charge? Not the profit-steered multi-nationals. Perhaps then, some thought would be given to all the people who'll lose their jobs as a result of this change, and what alternative sources of income might be made available to them.

Speaker 3:

Overall I'm fairly optimistic about it. But I do worry about the interim period when conventional vehicles share the road with driverless ones. One of the claims made for autonomous cars is that they can be lighter, shedding heavy metal crash protection and expensive safety gear, like airbags. All this would be great - saving fuel, reducing emissions



and leading to less air pollution. But it's not so going to feel so great when someone driving their old-fashioned ordinary car collides into the new Google car you've just paid a small fortune for 'cos a cat ran out in front of them! As much as we might embrace change, the fact remains that we can't just launch new technology overnight.

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