

Listening Practice #1

Comprehension Questions

You'll hear 3 speakers talking about a mistake that they made in the past. Answer the questions below based on what each speaker says:

Speaker 1: What mistake did the speaker make, and how do they plan to avoid it in the future?

Speaker 2: What did the speaker say that caused tension, and what did they learn from the experience?

Speaker 3: What mistake did the speaker make with their schedule and how do they plan to manage it better?

Vocabulary and Phrases

Speaker 1

Drop the ball: to fail to do something properly or miss a responsibility

- He really **dropped the ball** when he forgot to submit the report on time.

Put (something) off: to delay or postpone something

- I always **put off** cleaning my room until Mom gets mad.

Pull it together: to organize or compose oneself or something

- After panicking for a minute, she managed to **pull it together** and finish the speech.

Face the music: to accept the consequences of one's actions

- After skipping class all week, he had to **face the music** when the principal called home.

Pay off: to result in success or benefit

- Studying every night really **paid off** when I got an A on the test.

The eleventh hour: the last possible moment before a deadline

- He turned in his essay at the **eleventh hour**, ten minutes before it was due.

Speaker 2

Put one's foot in one's mouth: to say something embarrassing or inappropriate

- I **put my foot in my mouth** when I asked if she was pregnant—she wasn't.

Blurt (something) out: to say something suddenly without thinking

- He **blurted out** the answer before the teacher finished the question.

Think it through: to consider something carefully before acting

- Before quitting your job, you should **think it through**.

Rub someone the wrong way: to annoy or offend someone unintentionally

- Her sarcastic tone really **rubbed me the wrong way**.

Clear the air: to resolve tension or misunderstanding

- After our argument, we had a talk to **clear the air**.

Run high: to be intense or strong (usually emotions)

- During the debate, emotions **ran high**, and people started shouting.

Speaker 3

Bite off more than one can chew: to take on more than one can handle

- I **bit off more than I could chew** by signing up for three clubs and two sports.

Juggle: to manage multiple tasks or responsibilities at once

- She's **juggling** school, a part-time job, and dance rehearsals.

Fall behind: to fail to keep up with progress or deadlines

- I **fell behind** in math after missing a week of school.

Burnout: a state of physical or emotional exhaustion from overwork

- After months of nonstop studying, I hit **burnout** and couldn't focus anymore.

Set boundaries: to establish limits to protect one's time or energy

- I've learned to **set boundaries**, so I don't get overwhelmed by others' demands.

Transcripts

Speaker 1: Missed Deadline

"I totally dropped the ball on my presentation last week. I kept putting it off, thinking I'd have time to pull it together last minute. But when the deadline hit, I was nowhere near ready. I had to face the music in front of my manager, and it wasn't pretty. I've learned that procrastination doesn't pay off. Now I map things out early and stick to my timeline. Lesson learned: don't wait until the eleventh hour."

Speaker 2: Speaking Without Thinking

"I really put my foot in my mouth during the team meeting. I blurted out a criticism without thinking it through, and it came off way harsher than I intended. The room went quiet, and I could tell I'd rubbed people the wrong way. I apologized afterward and tried to clear the air, but the damage was done. I've learned to slow down and think before I speak—especially when emotions run high. Words can't be taken back once they're out."

Speaker 3: Overcommitting

"I bit off more than I could chew this semester. Between classes, work, and volunteering, I barely had time to breathe. At first, I thought I could juggle it all, but I quickly started falling behind. I missed deadlines, forgot meetings, and felt constantly drained. I've learned that saying 'yes' to everything isn't a badge of honor—it's a fast track to burnout. Now I prioritize and set boundaries. It's okay to say 'no' sometimes."

Answers:

Speaker 1: The speaker procrastinated and didn't prepare their presentation in time. They plan to avoid this by mapping things out early and sticking to a timeline.

Speaker 2: The speaker blurted out a harsh criticism during a meeting without thinking. They learned to slow down and think before speaking, especially when emotions are high.

Speaker 3: The speaker took on too many responsibilities and became overwhelmed. They plan to manage it better by prioritizing tasks and setting boundaries.