

Listen to different people talk about how noise effects their concentration.

See how much you understand by trying the activity below and checking the answers below the audio script.

Comprehension activity:

In each case, match a summary of what was said to the speaker. The speakers are in the order in which you hear them.

Speaker	Summary statement
1. Martina	a) I have a clear policy on when I can have distractions.
2. Rachel	b) I was surprised to find I couldn't work like I had expected to.
3. Romesh	c) It's often difficult for me to find the ideal working conditions.
4. Mark	d) My expertise makes it easier for me to listen to music while I work.
5. John	e) Whether I listen to music or not depends on the amount of attention the task requires.

Martina:

"It depends what I'm doing. I can listen to music of any kind when I'm doing a translation, I like it, it helps me even, but if I'm doing some complex maths then I have to have silence. It depends on the level of concentration that's needed, I guess."

Rachel:

"No, it has to be complete silence for me. It's a real problem actually because I live in a shared house with lots of other students in the middle of a noisy city. It's very difficult to get real peace and quiet. When I can I go back to my parents who live out in the country. It's good when I have lots of exams to study for because it's so peaceful out there – no disturbances at all!"

Romesh:

"A bit of background buzz in the office is essential for me. I like working in a lively atmosphere, people around, chat, the radio on perhaps. It generates an energy which I find helps me concentrate. I once came in to work on a Sunday when I had a big project to finish off – the deadline was the next day – and I thought it would be quiet on a Sunday, no one else around. Well, it was quiet and there was no one here, and you know what? It drove me mad! I couldn't stand it!"

Mark:

"I can't stand noise or distractions of any kind when I'm trying to concentrate, though I realise it's essential in a busy working environment. However, I have my quiet hour – between 3 and 4 every afternoon. People know not to disturb me except in an emergency. No phone calls, mobile switched off, door shut. It's a good strategy. I get most of my work done in that time. I'm not distracted by troubleshooting problems.

John:

"We always have music on while we work. People are often surprised to hear it, but my job is actually quite routine and boring. Of course, it takes skill and knowledge but the experience I have means that most of the time there's absolutely no problem. I think we put music on to combat the boredom rather than aid concentration. And we put on something very fast, like "the Ride of the Valkyries" when there's a backlog of work to do and we have to get through the patients very quickly."

Comprehension Answer:

1-e; 2-c; 3-b; 4-a; 5-d.