

### SKILL 3: AVOID SIMILAR SOUNDS

Often the incorrect answers in Listening Part A are answers that contain words with *similar* sounds but very different meanings from what you hear in the recording program. You should definitely avoid these answers.

#### Example

On the recording, you hear:

- (man) *Why couldn't Mark come with us?*  
 (woman) *He was searching for a new apartment.*  
 (narrator) *What does the woman say about Mark?*

In your test book, you read:

- (A) He was in the department office.  
 (B) He was looking for a place to live.  
 (C) He was working on his research project.  
 (D) He had an appointment at church.

The key words in the second line of the conversation are *searching* and *apartment*. In answers (C) and (D) the words *research* and *church* sound like *search*, so these answers are incorrect. In answers (A) and (D), the words *department* and *appointment* sound like *apartment*, so these answers are incorrect. The best answer is therefore answer (B).

The following chart outlines a very important strategy for Listening Part A:

#### STRATEGY #3: AVOID SIMILAR SOUNDS

1. Identify key words in the second line of the conversation.
2. Identify words in the answers that contain similar sounds, and do not choose these answers.

NOTE: In Appendix A there are drills to practice distinguishing similar sounds. You may want to complete these practice drills before trying the following exercises.

**EXERCISE 3:** In this exercise, underline key words in the second line of each short conversation. Then underline words with sounds similar to these key words in the answers, and choose the best answer to each question. Remember that the best answer is probably the answer that does not contain words with sounds that are similar to the sounds of the key words in the second line of the conversation.

1. (woman) *I heard that Sally just moved into a new, big house near the beach.*  
 (man) *But Sally doesn't have a cent!*  
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*  
 (A) Sally has no sense of responsibility.  
 (B) Sally sent her friend to the house.  
 (C) Sally has no money.  
 (D) Sally is on the set with her.

2. (woman) *Did they get the new car they wanted?*  
 (man) *No, they lacked the money.*  
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*  
 (A) They locked the map in a car.  
 (B) They looked many times in the car.  
 (C) It cost a lot of money when the car leaked oil.  
 (D) They didn't have enough money to buy another car.
3. (man) *Have you finished packing yet?*  
 (woman) *You should call the porter to get the suitcases.*  
 (narrator) *What does the woman mean?*  
 (A) It's important to pack the suitcases.  
 (B) They need help carrying their bags.  
 (C) The man should pack his suit in case he needs it.  
 (D) The suitcases are quite portable.

**TOEFL EXERCISE 3:** In this exercise, listen carefully to the short conversation and question in the recording program, and then choose the best answer to the question. You should be careful to avoid answers with similar sounds.



NOW BEGIN THE RECORDING PROGRAM AT TOEFL EXERCISE 3.

1. (A) She has to wait for some cash.  
 (B) The waiter is bringing a glass of water.  
 (C) The lawn is too dry.  
 (D) She needs to watch out for a crash.
2. (A) The sweater's the wrong size.  
 (B) The man's feet aren't sweating.  
 (C) The sweater makes the man seem fat.  
 (D) The sweet girl doesn't feel right.
3. (A) He has been regularly using a computer.  
 (B) He communicates with a Boston company.  
 (C) He regularly goes to communities around Boston.  
 (D) He has been traveling back and forth to Boston.
4. (A) He thought the lesson didn't matter.  
 (B) He couldn't learn the lesson.  
 (C) He learned a massive number of details.  
 (D) He didn't like most of the lesson.
5. (A) Some animals started the first fire.  
 (B) Animals are killed by forest fires.  
 (C) In the first frost, animals die.  
 (D) Frost can kill animals.
6. (A) Twenty pairs of shoes are on sale.  
 (B) The shoe salesclerk spent twenty dollars on pears.  
 (C) The shoes cost twenty dollars.  
 (D) The shoes could be repaired for twenty dollars.
7. (A) Tom tended to dislike biology lab.  
 (B) Attendance wasn't necessary at biology lab.  
 (C) Tom went to biology lab.  
 (D) There was a tendency to require biology lab.
8. (A) The meal will be served at noon.  
 (B) The males should be driven there by noon.  
 (C) He's expecting the ice to melt before noon.  
 (D) The letters ought to be delivered at 12:00.
9. (A) The weather will probably get worse later.  
 (B) The newspaper headlines described a bad storm.  
 (C) There was news about a headstrong man.  
 (D) He had a new bed.
10. (A) If she could do the grocery shopping.  
 (B) If she prefers cooked vegetables or salad.  
 (C) If she could help prepare the salad.  
 (D) If she minds shopping for vegetables.