

What is a Functional Listening Evaluation?

A Functional Listening Evaluation (FLE) measures how well a student understands speech in real school situations, not just in a quiet testing room.

• Think of it like this: *Just as an eye exam checks how you see at different distances, an FLE checks how you hear in different situations.*

An FLE helps students, families, and teachers understand:

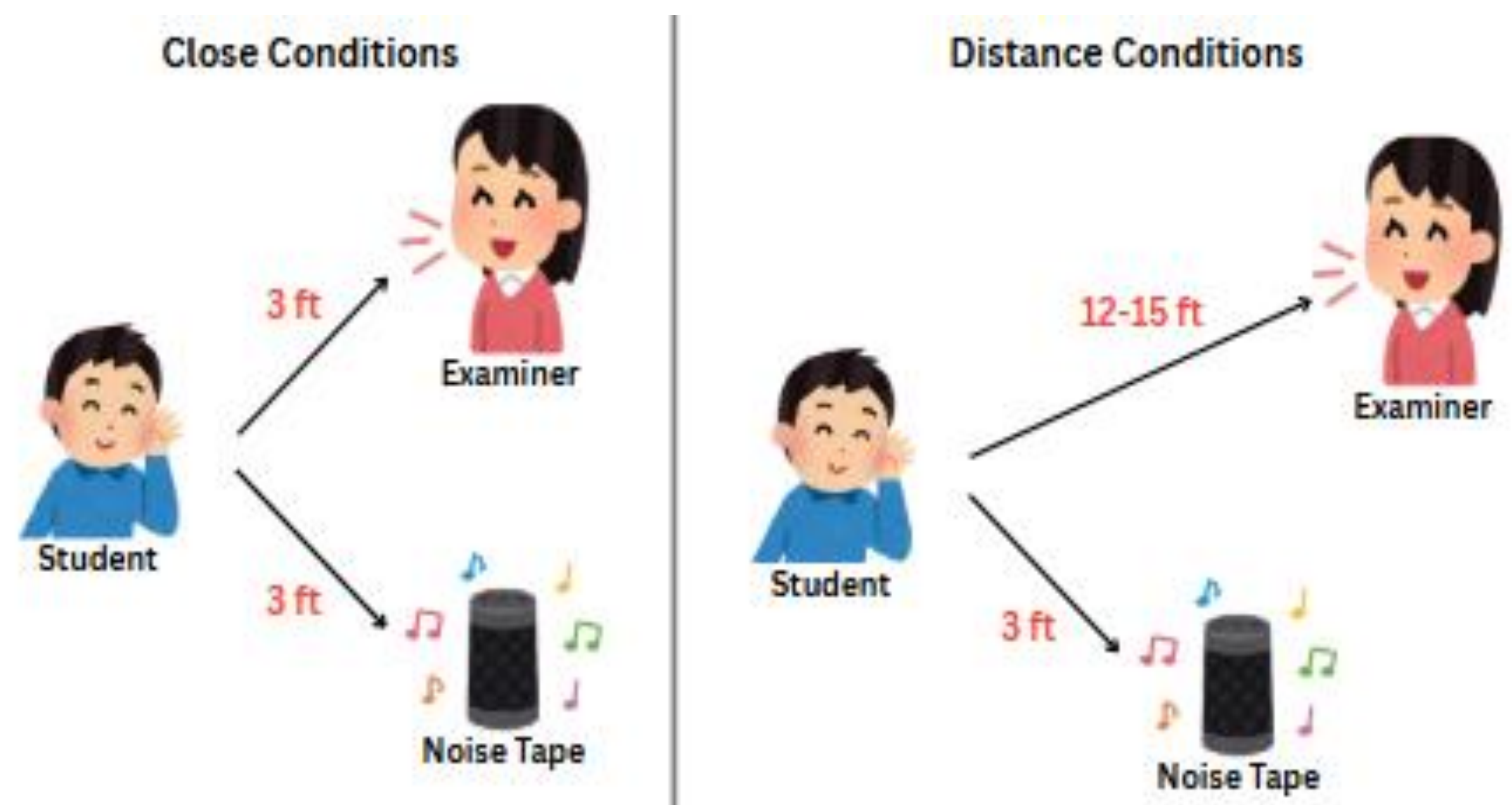
- How listening changes in school environments
- When listening becomes more difficult
- What supports make listening easier

An FLE is completed by an **educational audiologist**, a school-based hearing specialist, who supports students with hearing loss.

During an FLE, students listen to words or sentences while the tester changes the following elements; distance, background noise, visual access, & with/without technology.

The FLE Set Up:

- **Distance from Speaker:** near (3 ft) vs. far (12 ft)
- **Noise:** quiet vs. background noise
- **Visual Access:** face visible vs. not visible
- **Technology:** with and without hearing devices



Listening Fatigue and Learning Impact

Listening fatigue happens when a child has to work extra hard to listen and understand. For students with hearing loss, this can make them feel tired, stressed, or frustrated, especially in a noisy environment. Many classrooms are louder than they should be, which makes listening more difficult, forcing students to use more energy to keep up.

Listening fatigue may cause:

- Zoning out
- Irritability
- Trouble focusing and learning



How to help reduce listening fatigue:

- Use hearing technology and classroom supports
- Give listening breaks during the day
- Use visual supports (captions, written notes, ASL interpreters)
- Include supports in an IEP or 504 Plan

Key things to Know

Students

- Your FLE helps you understand YOUR listening needs so you can thrive.
- Educational audiologists are school hearing specialists who support listening.
- Advocate for yourself! Ask for repeats, use technology, take listening breaks.
- Technology and breaks are tools, not cheating!

Families

- Scores show how well your child understands across listening situations
- Results guide supports and communication access at school
- Families support success by reviewing results and encouraging consistent use of supports and devices
- The FLE is repeated when listening needs, technology, or environments change

General Education Teachers

- The FLE shows effects of noise, distance, and visual access on listening
- Key supports for students: face student, reduce noise, provide visual or written information
- Encourage technology use and check for understanding
- Adjust instruction using FLE results and collaborate with educational audiologist
- Watch for listening fatigue and provide breaks when needed

Educational Application, Access, and Transition

FLE testing results help guide Individual Education Plan (IEP) decisions by creating a communication plan based on preferred listening, learning, and communication supports.

Technology Accommodations	Environmental Changes
Remote microphone systems	Preferential Seating
Closed Captioning	Carpeting
Classroom sound-field systems	Acoustic treatments

Using FLE data helps make IEP goals more specific and student-focused

- **IEP Goal Without FLE:**
 - The student will listen better in class.
- **IEP Goal With FLE:**
 - Given appropriate auditory supports, the student will accurately follow 2-3 step oral directions in a classroom setting, including environments with background noise, with 80% accuracy across 4 out of 5 opportunities.



Connection to transition and life after school (FLE)

- Helps students know **which places are hardest to hear** and **which supports help most**
- Builds **independence** and **self-advocacy**
- Prepares students for **work, college, job training, and daily life**
- Helps students **explain listening needs** and **request accommodations** (HAT, captioning, quieter seating)
- Uses data to make **smart choices** about where to sit, when to use technology, and when to ask for help

FLE Results

FLE results help to:

- Identify barriers to learning and participation
- Guide accommodations & technology decisions
- Provide real-life listening data to support educational planning

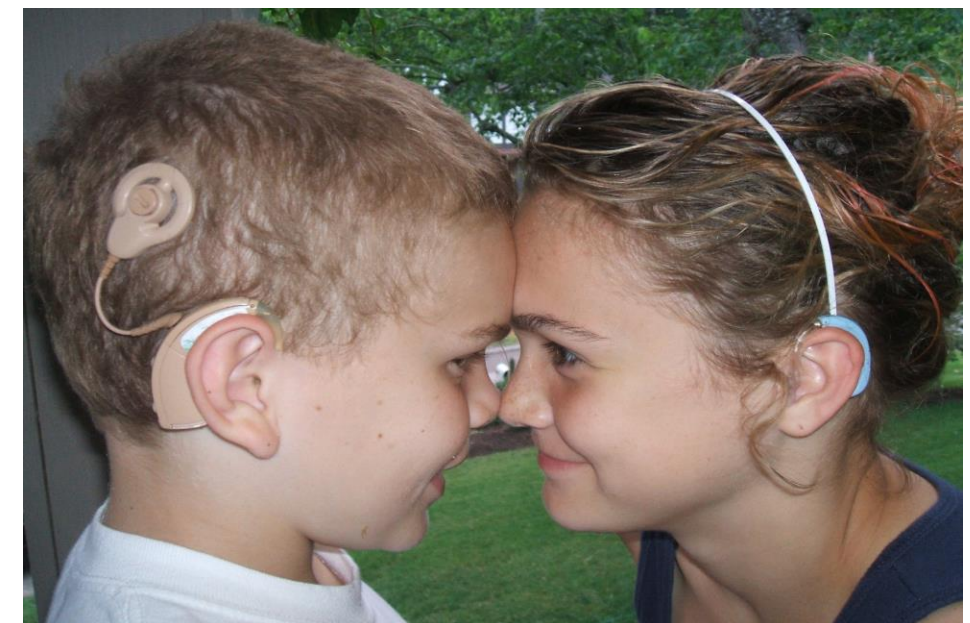


An FLE might show:

- **95% understanding** of speech when the speaker is 3 feet away but only **60% understanding** when the speaker is 12 feet away

Parent Perspective

Mother of two children with bilateral sensorineural Hearing Loss



Purpose of the FLE

"How you hear depends on where you are."

- The FLE helped us to see that listening changes in different places. This affected how our children took part in school. The educational audiologist explained the purpose clearly, and the evaluation was done in real school settings (classroom, lab, gym, auditorium, and sports field).

Student & Technology Use

"You don't know what you don't know."

- Demonstrations (like word lists) showed our children how much hearing technology could help. They realized what they had been missing and began using their devices more often.

IEP & Educational Planning

"Unfortunately, you have to have the data to prove it."

- The FLE data showed which places needed special accommodations. This helped us adjust HAT and seating recommendations because the results showed that our children had different listening needs in different school areas. It also allowed us to try supports for a short time to gather clear evidence before making final decisions.

Family Reflection

"You retire from this field. I do not. It is my life."

- Repeating the FLE over time helped us make changes as our children faced new places and new technology. Using family-friendly language was the best way to help us understand the process.

References

1. Davis, H., Schlundt, D., Bonnet, K., Camarata, S., Hornsby, B., & Bess, F. H. (2021). Listening-Related Fatigue in Children With Hearing Loss: Perspectives of Children, Parents, and School Professionals. *American Journal of Audiology*, 30, 929–940. https://doi.org/pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.1044/2021_AJA-20-00216
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3. PaTTAN - Deaf/Hard of Hearing. (2025). *Pattan.net*. <https://www.pattan.net/Evidence-Based-Practices/DeafHard-of-hearing>