New part of speech (indicated by ▶)

Part of speech

Core sense

Subsenses (introduced by ■)

ear[1] ▶ noun the organ of hearing and balance in humans and other vertebrates, especially the external part of this. ■ an organ sensitive to sound in other animals. ■ [in sing.] an ability to recognize, appreciate, and reproduce sounds, especially music or language: ***an ear for rhythm and melody***. ■ used to refer to a person's willingness to listen to others: *she offers a sympathetic ear to worried pet owners*.

Encyclopedic information

> The ear of a mammal is composed of three parts. The outer or external ear consists of a fleshy external flap and a tube leading to the eardrum or tympanum. The middle ear is an air-filled cavity connected to the throat, containing three small linked bones that transmit vibrations from the eardrum to the inner ear. The inner ear is a complex fluid-filled labyrinth including the spiral cochlea (where vibrations are converted to nerve impulses) and the three semicircular canals (forming the organ of balance).

Label (showing level of formality)

Phrase

Example (showing typical use)

– PHRASES **be all ears** informal be listening eagerly. **bring something** (**down**) **about one's ears** bring misfortune on oneself: *she brought her world crashing about her ears*. **one's ears are burning** one is subconsciously aware of being talked about or criticized. **grin** (or **smile**) **from ear to ear** smile broadly. **have something coming out of one's ears** informal have a substantial amount of something: *that man's got money coming out of his ears*. **have someone's ear** have access to and influence with someone: *he claimed to have the prime minister's ear*. **have** (or **keep**) **an ear to the ground** be well informed about events and trends. **in one ear and out the other** heard but quickly forgotten: *whatever he tells me seems to go in one ear and out the other*. **listen with half an ear** not give one's full attention. **be out on one's ear** informal be dismissed ignominiously. **reach someone's ears** be heard or heard about by someone: *the sound of running feet reached my ears* | *one of those stories reached our ears*. **up to one's ears in** informal very busy with: *I'm up to my ears in work here*.

– DERIVATIVES **eared** adjective [in combination] *long-eared*, **earless** adjective.

– ORIGIN Old English *ēare*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *oor* and German *Ohr*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *auris* and Greek *ous*.

Homonym number (indicates different word with the same spelling)

ear[2] ▶ noun the seed-bearing head or spike of a cereal plant. ■ N. Amer. a head of maize.

– ORIGIN Old English *ēar*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *aar* and German *Ähre*.

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