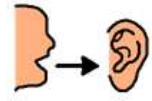


Listening and attention

Listening skills are important for helping young children to understand and use words themselves. Listening not only involves hearing the words, but thinking about them too. Children need to be able to filter out other sounds and distractions, and focus their attention on the important information.



Children go through different stages of listening and attention as they develop. Children at an earlier stage of development or those with listening and attention difficulties may have difficulty following instructions. They may appear to ignore you or be easily distracted; they may struggle to sit still or flit between activities. These children may require support to develop their listening and attention skills.

Strategies for listening and attention:

- Reduce distractions. Where possible, reduce distractions such as background noise. Having the TV or radio on all the time, for example, can make it difficult to know which sounds are the most important to listen to.
- Get down to your child's level. Being face to face with you will make it easier to listen.
- Get your child's attention. Say their name first before speaking or giving an instruction.
- Some children may also need a direct prompt to listen (e.g. 'Jack, listen'). Praise your child for responding to you.
- Talk about listening. Point out the sounds you can hear in your environment (e.g. 'Listen...I can hear a helicopter').
- Use positive language to praise your child's 'good listening'.
- Keep activities short. When developing your child's attention span, keep activities short, follow your child's lead and move on when they lose interest. Build up the length of the time spent focusing on an activity gradually.
- Using activities with a clear end point can help develop your child's attention span. Show your child how many steps there are until completion (e.g. 4 pieces in jigsaw, 2 pictures that need glued down, etc.).
- Encourage your child to complete the last step in an activity so that they can experience success in completing it, even if you do the rest (e.g. adult helps complete most of jigsaw, child completes the last jigsaw piece).

