

Top Tips For Supporting Attention & Listening Skills; Early Years and Key Stage 1

- **Minimise distractions** - listening involves the ability to filter out distractions, it may help to remove distractions such as toys or displays from the area where you want the child to listen.
- **Use a name call** - If the child is busy, try calling their name before talking to them or giving them an instruction.
- **Keep your language simple** – encourage listening and attention by simplifying what you say. Try 'chunking' longer sentences into a series of shorter sentences.
- **Use your voice and facial expression to keep their interest in activities** -Speak in a lively animated voice to make your words sound more interesting. Use lots of interesting sounds, like "Pop!" or "Whoosh!", to get the child's attention.
- **Get down to their level** - When talking to the child try and get down to their level so you're face to face with them. This helps them to know that you are talking to them and allows them to see your face.
- **Encourage turn-taking** - Increasing a child's ability to take turns at a very simple level, e.g. taking it in turns to put a brick on a tower, will have a positive impact on their listening.
- **Sit the child who finds it tricky to listen opposite you** – This will allow the child to gain maximum benefit from visual and non-verbal clues and will also enable you to monitor their listening and attention levels more closely.
- **Encourage participation** – Listening is often viewed as a passive activity where children have to keep still. Encouraging and allowing them to join in with gestures, props and movement will help them to listen and maintain their attention for longer.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat** – Young children thrive on repetition. Repetition of stories, rhymes and activities is even more beneficial for children with delayed listening and attention.

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- **Reduce group size** – Children learn to listen during one-to-one situations and then in groups of gradually increasing size. Some children take much longer to cope with group activities than others. Reducing the group size will have a positive impact on listening and attention levels.
- **Use visual clues** – Using pictures and props alongside spoken language supports listening and attention. Children's listening and attention skills are therefore supported by visual attention.
- **Use music** - Musical instruments are a great way of getting a child's attention. Try shaking a tambourine or banging a drum to encourage the child to stop what they are doing and to listen. Sing songs that have actions in them e.g. row row row your boat and head, shoulders, knees and toes. You could use musical instruments, household objects and clapping to help maintain the child's focus.

Activities to Develop Attention & Listening Skills – Early Years & Key Stage 1

Remember to reinforce the rules of good looking / good listening / good sitting and good waiting when playing any of these games.

- **Listening to Silence**

Make the child aware of the sound and silence. Sit quietly for a minute and ask the child to whisper or write anything they could hear, e.g. neighbour breathing, aeroplane, clock ticking, a person coughing etc. This can be carried out as a whole class and can be repeated in different settings – in the classroom, outside etc.

- **Copy the Rhythm**

Collect a selection of instruments. Bang a drum or shake the maracas a certain number of times for the child to listen to. This can also be played as a barrier game with each of you having the same instruments as each other, so the child has to identify which instrument is being used. Can they repeat your performance doing the same number and rhythm as you?

- **Sorting Sounds**

You will need different shakers/instruments for this game, e.g. rice, pebbles, maracas, drum, triangle etc. Make the noises and ask the child to decide if you played it loudly or quietly? Can they sort the instruments accordingly?

- **Acting to Sounds**

You will need different shakers/instruments for this game, e.g. rice, pebbles, maracas, drum, triangle etc. Demonstrate an action for each sound (e.g. drum = clapping, triangle = jumping etc.) Play an instrument sound and ask the child to do the action.

- **Ready Steady Go**

Ask the child to put a ring on a stick, or put a marble down the marble run, build a tower and knock it down, post an object in a box, kick a ball etc., when you say 'go'. Vary the length of time between each 'go'.

- **Jack-in-the-box**

Ask the child to crouch down. When you clap your hands or bang a drum, he/she has to jump up.

- **Where's that Sound 1?**

For this game you will need to blindfold the child so that he/she cannot peep. Make a noise and ask him/her to point in the direction that it came from.

- **Where's that Sound 2?**

This game is carried out with a child blindfolded in the centre of circle. Children in the circle hand round an object that is very sensitive to movement and makes a noise when moved. The child in the middle has to listen for the noise to locate the object. The children in the circle have to try to move the object on from one to the other without it making a noise.

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- **Where's that Sound 3?**

Stand or sit in a circle. One child is blindfolded and stands in the middle. Another child sitting is pointed to and must clap their hands. The child in the middle must then point to where the sound came from.

- **Follow the clap**

Sit in a circle. One person must clap and their neighbour must clap after and so on, until the clap reaches the start. Agree the direction of the clapping before starting. Develop the game further by using a whistle. When you blow the whistle the direction of the clap must change.

- **Who's Talking?**

Sit in a circle. One child is blindfolded, stands in the middle and is then spun around. They point their finger and whoever they point to has to say "Hello" The person blindfolded has to guess who the person is.

- **Sound Lotto**

Child listens to a sound and identifies the sound s/he hears by placing a token/holding up/jumping on the appropriate picture

- **Simon Says**

Give instructions to the child for them to do. Start off with one and build up to two instructions. For example 'Simon Says touch your nose' (one step direction), 'Simon says touch your nose and stamp your feet' (two step direction.)

- **Singing**

Sing songs and rhymes which have actions with them, e.g. Wheels on the Bus, Wind the Bobbin up, Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes etc.

- **Musical bumps**

The children dance to the music, when it stops they must sit down. The last one to sit is out. This game can be varied in several ways, e.g. the children walk around and sit down when they hear a whistle. If they hear another whistle they stand up, but if they hear a bell they must lie down.

- **Musical Statues**

The children move around when they hear the music and then must standstill when the music stops. Anyone caught moving is out.

- **Copy the Action**

Sit in a circle and nominate a leader. All the children must watch the leader and copy the actions they do. Try and wait until everyone is doing the same before changing the action. Call children's names to prompt them to look and copy. Change the leader after a few turns. Ensure that it is clear to all children that the leader has changed and who the new leader is. This can be varied where an action is passed around the circle. Each child must wait until their neighbour looks at them to pass on the action.