

Attention and Listening

Why is this so important?

Attention and listening are vital skills in the development of language, speech sounds and literacy. Good attention is the ability to focus the eyes and/or ears on something specific for a certain length of time.

On average a child will have one minute's attention for every one year of their life.

If we are given two different pieces of information at once, e.g. if we are expected to listen to music and look at the demonstration, we may find that:

- we cannot do both at once
- we are probably more attracted to visual information
- we have learnt the skills of blocking out one thing to concentrate on another.

Your child must be able to listen and be attentive to what is happening around them in order to understand it. If not, they may have difficulties;

- paying attention to the speaker
- remembering what they have been told
- listening to long sentences
- following instructions.

A good attention span is needed before a child can begin to understand language. Extending the time a child is able to concentrate on one activity will develop their attention and listening skills. Many young children have a short attention span and those with communication difficulties may have particular problems with concentration.



Attention is the basis of ALL learning

Children can be helped to listen and look appropriately and to control their own focus of attention.



How to help develop your child's Attention and Listening

Story Time

Choose a story to read to your child. Then choose a target word which is repeated often within the story. Before you begin, tell your child the word you have chosen and ask them to listen carefully for that word and when they hear it they can clap their hands.

Example;

Story: Goldilocks and the three Bears

Target word: Goldilocks

Action: Clap your hands



Remember that you can use other actions too, such as asking your child to put a pebble in a cup every time they hear the target word.

'Simon Says'

Play a game of 'Simon Says', with your child. This will encourage them to listen and respond to the instructions you have given.

Make sure that you are playing the game in an area which has few distractions, e.g. background noise, television, etc.

Play the Game

Ask your child to listen carefully for the instruction, e.g. '*Simon says, "put your hands on your head".*' Once your child is able to follow single instructions like this, you can see if they can listen for two instructions, e.g. '*Simon says, "clap your hands and stamp your feet".*'

Always remember to reinforce the Good Listening rules.

Listening for Sounds

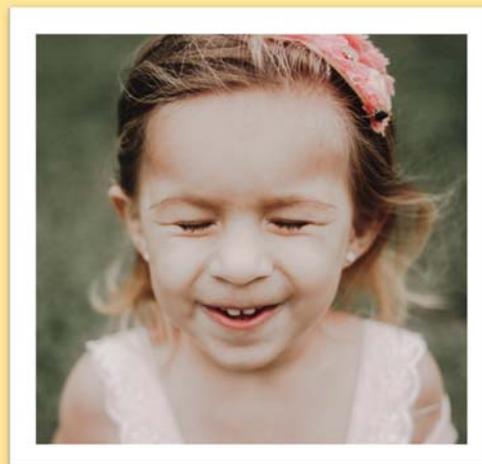
Gather up a range of objects from around the house such as; keys, a ball, a cup and spoon, buttons in a jar, a squeaky toy, a shaker (can be made from a butter tub and rice), or any other noise making objects you have around your home.

Play the game

Put the objects in front of your child and then get them to close their eyes. You can then make a sound using one of the objects, e.g. shake the keys.

Ask your child to identify the object which made the sound.

Once they can do this, you can see if they can identify a sequence of two sounds.



Jelly Bean Game

This activity can be carried out when you are at home. It can involve a number of family or friends. The idea is that one person calls out the different jelly beans and the listeners pretend to be that type of bean. You should remind your child to stand still and listen for instructions;

'Jelly bean!' = move around like a jelly

'Jumping bean!' = jump on the spot

'Runner bean!' = run on the spot

'Broad bean!' = make your body as wide as possible

'String bean!' = make your body as long/tall as possible

'Mexican bean!' = shout *'Olé!'*



Have fun thinking of new types of beans and the corresponding activities.