

Ideas to improve attention and listening



What is it?

Listening is an important skill necessary to assist with language development and communication. The ability to attend involves concentration on one sound i.e. a person's voice and filtering out competing distractions such as background noise, visual stimulation and things to touch or feel. Listening is an active process of interpreting the information we have heard.

How do children learn to listen?



Good sitting: Children need to sit in a comfortable position with hands in their lap and where they can easily see the speaker's face. Not all children find it easy to sit cross legged on the floor and this may result in a lot of shuffling around and fidgeting, therefore it may be necessary to position a child with his/her back leaning against something in order to feel comfortable. Verbally reward good sitting by putting thumbs up and say "good sitting!"

Good looking (looking at the speaker): Minimise distractions and then work on gaining eye contact. Some games such as stacking beakers or posting items in a box can be used to gain eye contact. For example, take turns stacking beakers and before putting one on the pile, wait for the child to give eye contact and then put the beaker on the pile saying "good looking!" Taking turns is an essential skill required to develop basic communication skills.

Good listening: Taking turns encourages good listening. Pass a ball or car between you, say "ready, steady (pause) go" and encourage the child to look at you before passing the toy.

Encourage a child to copy the pattern of beats on a drum (a plastic bowl and wooden spoon will do). Say "Good listening!" when the child copies your beats. Remember to wait a minimum of 10 seconds before expecting a response.

Pack a bag for teddy to take on a day out and ask your child to fetch the items that teddy may need.