

Audiology

Patient Information Leaflet (PL)

Listening skills for school age children



This leaflet has been provided to help answer some of the questions you may have about listening skills for school-age children.

What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Hearing and listening are different skills. Hearing is the ability to detect a sound. This can be tested in clinic. Listening is the ability to pay attention to sounds, or to make a conscious effort to hear. If a child has normal hearing sensitivity, they may still need some encouragement to improve their listening skills. Children are exposed to lots of different situations and environments, some of which require more listening skills than others.

It is important that children learn to listen well at home. However, even if they develop good listening skills at home, some children can find it difficult in busier situations at play group or nursery where there are more distractions. Children with a history of hearing difficulties may have poor listening skills. This leaflet describes some tips designed to help your child develop and practise their listening skills.

How can I develop my child's listening skills at home?

- Make sure that you get your child's attention before speaking to him/ her. Call their name first and then speak
- Don't shout. If you move closer to your child, your voice will naturally sound louder
- Give your child plenty of time to ask questions
- Face your child when speaking and make sure that they can see your face
- Give some visual clues. For example, point at the object you are talking about
- Reduce background noise if possible. Be aware of noise from the television, other children and household appliances
- Play some of the listening games listed overleaf.

What about listening at school?

- Make sure you let your child's teacher know if you feel your child has poor listening skills.
- Ask the teacher to minimise background noise as much as possible in the classroom. For example, noise from other classrooms and traffic or machinery sounds via open windows.

What about games to develop listening skills?

- “I went for a walk and saw...” where the list of things seen gets added to by each player
- Drawing games – give your child a set of instructions to draw a familiar object, then ask him/ her to guess what it is
- Alphabet memory games – choose a topic (such as animals) and use each letter (for example, ant, bee, cat, dog)
- Silly sentence games - say a sentence in which one word is incorrect and then ask your child to guess which word is wrong
- “What is it?” – describe a familiar animal, person or object for your child to guess
- Clapping patterns – ask your child to repeat a clapping pattern (for example, a mixture of loud and quiet; hard and soft)
- Twenty questions – think of a familiar person for your child and other players to guess. They should try to guess who it is by asking up to 20 yes/ no questions.

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