

Tips for Listening

Children learn from what they see and hear going on around them, so developing good looking and attention skills is important.

As a child grows, their learning depends on their ability to develop and maintain their concentration span. With good attention and listening skills, your child's talking and learning will progress.

Early attention and listening advice:

- Work/play somewhere quiet, without distractions. Turn off the TV, radio and telephones.
- Sit down opposite your child, so you are at the same level, facing each other.
- Call your child's name before asking them to do something.
- Make sure your child is looking at you when talking to them. If you need to, gently turn their head towards you.
- Have just one toy or activity out to concentrate on. Put other toys out of sight.
- Always encourage your child to finish what they are doing, e.g. puzzle, drawing, book.
- Keep your instructions clear and simple. Stress the important words by saying them a little louder and clearer.
- Keep things simple. It is better to finish a 3 piece puzzle than leave a harder one unfinished. Help if necessary, but don't take over!
- Talk about one thing at a time and talk about what is happening now.
- Show your child how to take turns – “your turn, my turn”.
- Stop when you feel you are losing your child's interest. Try doing something else for a while and go back to it later.
- Give your child lots of praise and encouragement for good looking and listening.

Advice for older children:

Try a change to the environment...

- Reduce distractions e.g. turn off the television; have fewer toys out.
- Choose an activity that your child loves – then they will really want to join in

Try some visual support...

- Focus your child's attention by asking them to look at your face before you give an instruction.
- Use visual clues e.g. gestures, objects, pictures, writing down the instructions or key words
- Show your child what you mean. It's important that your child experiences success.

Try some talking strategies...

- Tell them exactly how to do good listening: e.g. sit still, look at who is talking, think about what is being said.
- Give your child specific praise e.g. "Well done you listened really well to that story."
- Give instructions in small steps - one piece of information at a time.
- Emphasise the key words that will help your child to know what to do. e.g. you need your shoes ... and bag.
- Give instructions in the order they are to happen, e.g. "Put your shoes away then wash your hands".

For ideas for activities on supporting attention and listening skills see handout named **'Activities to Encourage Listening to Instructions'**.