

Listening & Attention

What is appropriate for children aged 22-36 months

Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus.

Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories.

Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.

What is appropriate for children aged 30-50 months

Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them.

Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall.

Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories.

Still listen **or** do, but can shift own attention.

Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).

What is appropriate for children aged 40-60+ months

Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions.

Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate.

Can listen and do for short span.

Can listen and do in range of situations with range of people; varies according to the demands of the task.

Common Signs of Difficulties:

- The child is easily distracted and attention flits from one thing to another
- The child prefers to follow their own agenda
- The child cannot tolerate interruption when engaged in a self chosen task
- Finds it difficult to understand directions
- May have little awareness of danger
- To attract the child's attention you often have to make physical contact

Factors Affecting Listening & Attention:

- Noisy environments
- Neurological / medical problems including medication
- Tiredness
- Emotional / Behavioral difficulties
- Distractions in the environment
- Task set at too high level for the child
- Child lacks motivation because they don't understand the task or instruction, materials are uninteresting, task is meaningless, no sense of achievement when completing the task

Strategies to Support Listening & Attention

- Reduce background noise
- Have a signal known to the children which means it's time to listen
- Seat the children to ensure that they can see your face
- Plan activities that are developmentally appropriate
- Have a good role model in the group
- Reduce visual distractions
- Use short simple sentences and simple words building up as appropriate
- Consider organisation of groups at story time. It may be more appropriate to

have smaller groups

- Get down to the child's level to gain eye contact
- Say the child's name first before delivering an instruction
- Play alongside the child during their self chosen activity to extend play and language
- Let the child choose from a range of things they like to play with. Let them lead the play so that they are interested in what you are doing
- If the child wanders off from an activity encourage them to come back for "just one minute"
- Promote "good listening" "good sitting", "good looking", "good waiting" and use visual prompts and gesture
- Try to find 5 minutes each day for 'special time'. A time to play and talk with the child
- Praise the child for listening and concentrating during special time
- Use positive body language
- Demonstrate tasks
- Limit choices
- Play alongside the child giving a commentary on the play rather than asking too many questions
- Use pictures / visual timetable to help awareness of routines
- Keep to consistent routines and names for activities and places
- Nurture conversation through pairings around resources that encourage sharing and working together e.g. floor jigsaws and matching pairs
- Ensure your environment offers small, less visually stimulating and quiet spaces both indoors and out

Further Information:

Websites:

- www.ican.org.uk
- www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk
- www.hello.org.uk
- www.elizabethjarmanltd.co.uk
- <http://www.stokespeaksout>
- www.elklan.co.uk

Books:

- Helping Young Children to Listen, Ros Bayley & Lynn Broadbent ISBN:978-1-903670-04-0
- Helping Young Children to Concentrate, Ros Bayley & Lynn Broadbent ISBN:978-1-903670-29-2
- Early Language Builders, Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan (published by ELKLAN)
- A Place to Talk (range of books available) Elizabeth Jarman ISBN: 978-1-906029-26-5

Resources:

- Refer to Pre School Basic Communication Group Activities
- Inclusion Development Programme (Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs)