



Developing Listening and Attention Skills at Home

Listening is one of the basic building blocks of language and communication and, particularly in the early years of education, one of the main vehicles for a child's learning. Children don't acquire the ability to listen overnight. As with any skill, it has to be practised and encouraged.

Listening skills can be developed at home in fun ways, with simple games and activities. You probably do many of these already!

Listening Games	Listening Activities	Be a Listening Role Model
<p>'Old Favourites': Simon Says, Musical Statues, I went to the zoo and I saw a...</p> <p>Story Chain: Have one person begin a story: <i>"Once there was a little girl who lived in house way under the ocean."</i> and then have another contribute the next sentence, and so on. Because each person has to listen to what came before to advance the story, this game enhances listening skills.</p> <p>Broken Telephone: This can be played around the dinner table or anytime when at least 3 people are present. Make up a word or sentence and whisper it into your child's ear, who must whisper it to the next person, who continues passing the message around the table. The last person to hear the message says it out loud. This usually ends in laughter as the phrases often change and the message is broken. In time, your child will be able to listen to detail better and convey accurate messages.</p> <p>Odd One Out: Say a string of words to your child that are part of a particular theme or category. Insert one word into the set that does not belong and ask your child to identify the word that doesn't belong. e.g. <i>apple, banana, leopard, pear and apricot.</i></p>	<p>Use audio resources (stories, songs etc) as part of your child's regular activities.</p> <p>Sing action rhymes: When children are using their bodies to move, they are concentrating better, learning more and developing better listening skills.</p> <p>Use puppets and role play: it is far more interesting to follow instructions when they come from a puppet!</p> <p>Listening Mission: <i>"Your mission should you choose to accept it: Bring me the following items: a hairbrush from your bedroom and a slipper from your sister's room."</i> Each round, you can add one item, and award a prize at the end.</p> <p>Back-to-Back Pictures: get a pencil and paper for you and your child. Sit back-to-back and give instructions about what to draw on the paper: <i>"Draw a sun in the top right-hand corner and draw three clouds in the middle of your page."</i> <i>"Draw a tree in the bottom corner of the page with four apples on it".</i> Both of you follow the instructions without looking at each other's paper. Compare pictures at the end – do they match?</p>	<p>Get down to your child's level and make eye contact (if your child is comfortable with this).</p> <p>Ask open ended questions, value opinions and show genuine interest in what is being said.</p> <p>Praise your child when they listen well by using specific language. Try not to default to <i>'what a good boy/girl'</i>. Rather make statements such as: <i>"Fantastic! You listened carefully to all the instructions."</i> <i>"I can see from your picture that you were concentrating what you were asked to include. Great listening!"</i></p>