

## ATTENTION AND LISTENING IDEAS

Children need opportunity to look and listen. A good attention span is needed before a child can begin to understand early words

- Listening
- Looking
- Turn-taking

### Listening Games

Listening is important for your child to develop good communication skills. Here are some tips for encouraging your child to listen:

- Draw your child's attention to sounds in their environment e.g. door bell ringing, kettle boiling, clock ticking, rain on windows etc
- Listen for sounds when you are outside e.g. cars passing, dogs barking, footsteps, fire engines etc
- Hide a radio or clock somewhere (e.g. under a towel or cushion in the room), begin with it half-hidden and encourage your child to listen and find it. Gradually hide it completely and encourage them to find it just by listening

#### **DO:**

- Try to be patient
- Choose the right time of day for things
- Choose games which you both enjoy
- Build up your child's attention step by step
- Praise your child whenever they try

## Looking

Eye contact is important for communication. Try to encourage your child to look at you but never force them.

These ideas can be used to encourage eye contact:

- **Squeaky toys**

Hold a squeaky toy near your face and press it to make a noise. Stop the noise and wait for eye contact before you start again

- **Tickling games**

Tickle child and stop. Wait for eye contact before tickling again

- **Hiding objects behind your back**

Show your child a motivating object (e.g. favourite toy or sweet). Hide it behind your back and then wait for eye contact before giving it to your child

- **Shiny paper/foil**

Place in front of your face and play peek-a-boo games. Try moving the paper from left to right and see if your child can follow it with their eyes

- **Songs and rhymes**

For example-Row the boat, Round and Round the Garden, Pat-a-cake. All should be sung when facing your child.

- **Finger puppets**

Play with finger puppets but make sure you hold them at eye level.

Always try to get eye contact before doing things during play e.g. before you give a child a toy make sure they are looking at you. To gain eye contact use physical prompts (e.g. gently touching face) or calling child's name.

## Turn-taking Games

Turn-taking is important for developing communication skills. The following tips will help to develop your child's turn-taking skills:

- Start by working on your own with your child as it is much harder to learn to share with two or three brothers or sisters
- Stay in control of the situation by keeping hold of the toys you are using. This will make sure your child takes turns
- Use "my turn", "your turn" when taking turns
- If your child doesn't want to take turns, let them have two turns for every one that you take
- If your child doesn't co-operate, don't keep trying, have a go later!

Here are some games to try with your child:

- **Swapping objects**

For example: Rolling a ball back and forth. Sit opposite the child and say "my turn" and then roll them the ball. Then say "your turn" and wait for child to roll the ball back. You may need to show your child what to do first

- **Building towers**

Build a tower together, each taking it in turns to put on the next brick. You can ensure your child takes turns by handing them a brick when it is their go

- **Puzzles**

Complete a puzzle together. Try putting the puzzle pieces into a small cloth bag and hand the bag to the child when it is their turn. This will stop them grabbing pieces and completing the puzzle quickly

**Encourage turn-taking during everyday routines e.g.**

**take turns on slide and swings**

**take turns to play pat-a-cake**

**take turns to stir the cake mixture.**

## More Ideas .....

Here are some further ideas to develop your child's attention and listening skills:

- **Balloons**

Blow them up and let them go. Encourage the child to watch you as you blow the balloon up and then follow the balloon with their eyes as it whizzes round the room

- **Stacking beakers**

Take turns

Hide toys under one of the beakers whilst your child is looking. Then shuffle the beakers and see if they can remember which one it is under

- **Feely bag**

Put an object in a bag/pillow case. Get your child to feel the object inside the bag and see if they can guess what it is

- **Copying**

Encourage your child to copy things that you do e.g. banging bricks together, putting on a hat, pulling faces in the mirror

- **Sounds**

Copy the sounds that your child makes, this will encourage them to make sounds more often and gradually they should be able to imitate the sounds you make. Try to make sounds that are as much fun as possible e.g. 'brum, brum' with a car; 'woof, woof' with a dog. Praise and encourage your child's attempts at copying you

- **Matching and sorting**

Put two items in front of your child (you can add more later) then hold up a matching item and ask your child to find one the same

Try sorting things into groups e.g. all socks together, all spoons together, all toy cars together

- **Blowing bubbles**

Blow bubbles with your child. Take turns to pop the bubbles, say "pop" as you do it.

**Remember to:**

Have fun!

Play!

Do a little bit as often as possible

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