

## Attention Skills

### Paediatric Community Speech and Language Therapy

#### What is attention?

Attention is the ability to engage with what another person is saying and doing. Children develop attention over time. It takes 6 years for children to be able to shut out unwanted information and concentrate.

Children learn from what they see and hear going on around them, so developing good attention and listening skills is important. Good attention skills support children to learn, include learning speech and language skills.

#### How attention develops over time

##### **0-1 years: Fleeting attention**

Attention flits and is involuntary. The child is very easily distracted by anything including sounds and what they are looking at.

##### **1-2 years: Rigid attention**

Children often ignore adults both verbally and visually if concentrating on an activity e.g. blocks. Their attention is involuntary and they tend to pay attention to their own choice of activity.

##### **2-3 years: Single channeled attention**

Children need an adults help to shift their attention from one task to something else e.g. someone speaking to them.

##### **3-4 years: Focusing attention**

Children still only focus on one thing at a time but can refocus their attention if interrupted. They would need to stop an activity, look and listen to someone speaking to hear what's been said, and then turn back and carry on their activity.

##### **4-5 years: Two channeled attention**

Children focus on activities as well as listening to what is said without stopping the activity to look at who is speaking.

##### **5-6 years: Integrated attention**

Attention is sustained and children can shut out unwanted or unrelated information.

**How can I help?**

**Everyday Strategies**

- Work / play somewhere quiet without distractions.
- Sit down opposite your child, so you are at the same level.
- Say your child's name before speaking to them.
- Stop when you feel you are losing your child's interest. Do something else and then come back to the activity.
- Have just one toy or activity out at a time and put others out of sight.

**Activities for slightly older children**

- Go on listening walks with your child and name what you can hear.
- Drawing challenge – give your child instructions on what to colour / draw next.
- Tap a rhythm pattern for your child to copy.

**Remember to...**

Do a little every day  
Keep practice fun  
Praise your child when they take part or put effort in  
Say your child's name before you speak

**Helpful links**

[Listening Walk Guide – raising children website](#)



[Listening and attention activities: Luton and Bedfordshire](#)

