

Speech, Language and Communication 0-1 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could do

- Be physically close, make eye contact, use touch or voice - these all provide ideal opportunities for early conversations between adults and children and between one child and another



- Use a lively voice, with ups and downs to help babies tune in - exaggerating your tone of voice, using simple language and talking slower will mean it is more interesting and easier for young children to listen to
- Encourage playfulness, turn-taking and responses - peek-a-boo, singing and rhymes make communication fun for young children (e.g. round and round the garden, twinkle twinkle)



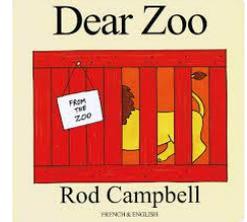
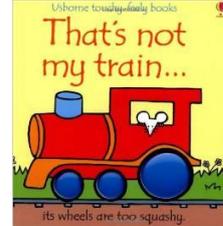
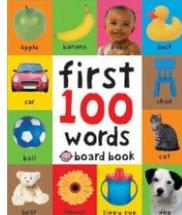
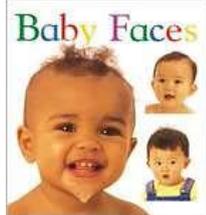
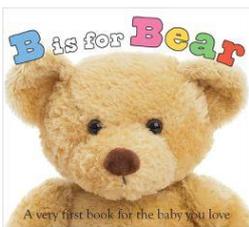
- Sing songs and rhymes during everyday routines - make up a song about changing a nappy and use the tune of a favourite song (e.g. 'this is the way we...')
- Use repeated sounds, words and phrases so young children can begin to recognise particular sounds - some of the first sounds young children will use are the vowel sounds ('oo', 'ahh') and the 'b', 'd', 'm' sounds. Play around with these sounds and copy back any sounds that you hear them make. This can become a turn taking game!

Speech, Language and Communication 0-1 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could provide

- Share stories, songs and rhymes - these should be simple; you don't need to 'read the book' using all the words, but talk about the pictures using just a few words and pointing (e.g. 'look a bird', 'it's a cow')



- Give lots of time and space for young children to explore safely and with an adult - the best resource for young children is an adult who can stay with them and play with them, using simple language and not asking lots of questions



- Play with simple noise-makers - show young children how these can make sounds and use the words that go with them (e.g. 'shake shake', 'jingle jingle', 'bang bang')



If you are making your own noise-maker bottles and discovery bottles, make sure they are always supervised and the lids are stuck on firmly with glue or cello-tape

Speech, Language and Communication 1-2 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could do

- Encourage young children to explore and imitate sounds



- Talk about the different sounds you can hear - 'That's an interesting sound... it's a plane!', 'I can hear a bird... tweet tweet tweet', 'leaves go crunch'



- Sing songs and rhymes - leave the last few words out, this will encourage children to listen and fill in the blanks (e.g. 'Old MacDonald had a...')



- Use repeated sounds and talk about environmental sounds - the sounds that generally develop in the first two years are the 'b', 'd', 'm', 'n' sounds. Talk about the animals that make the noises beginning with those sounds (e.g. 'moo', 'neigh', 'baa')

- When singing songs, help children to listen to the speed and volume - "this is the way we... shake it fast/shake it slow/shake it loud/shake it soft"



Speech, Language and Communication 1-2 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could provide

- Collect resources that children can listen to and learn to distinguish between - introduce a few items (e.g. tambourine, scrunched up paper, bell) and then use one to make a sound behind your back - can they show you which one it was?



- Use toy animals and make the sounds that go with them for the child to point to or copy - this should be a fun game, not a test!
- Share stories, songs and rhymes - these should be simple; you don't need to 'read the book' using all the words, but talk about the pictures using a few words and pointing (e.g. 'the dog's running', 'it's a big tractor')
- Give lots of time and space for young children to explore resources and activities safely with you - the best resource for young children is an adult who can stay with them and play with them, using simple language and not asking lots of questions



Speech, Language and Communication 2-3 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could do

- Encourage repetition, rhythm and rhyme by using tone and intonation as you tell stories and sing (e.g. 'and he *HUFFED*... and he *PUFFED*...')
- Model being a listener - give eye contact, get down to their level, and repeat back what children tell you, adding a few extra words



- Say a child's name before expecting them to give you their attention and listen
- Repeat instructions, breaking them down into their separate parts and in the order that they should happen - 'wash your hands... now you can have snack', 'put on your coat... now you can play outside'
- During periods of intense concentration, don't be afraid to stand back and observe for a while - young children find it difficult to do two things at once, and allowing thinking time is important
- Remember the five finger rule - Use four comments to every one question you ask. When you ask a question (e.g. 'I wonder what will happen next?') wait for the child to process - if they don't answer, you can model how that question could be answered (e.g. 'Maybe the wolf will be nice to the pigs')



Speech, Language and Communication 2-3 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could provide

- A quiet and calm environment - keep background noise to a minimum; it is difficult for young children to learn to listen when there are distractions. Providing quiet periods of time will help a child's development of concentration
- Use puppets and other props to encourage listening during story time and song time - these should hold a child's attention and add to whatever is being talked about or sung



- Encourage activities where children will learn each other's names - e.g. sitting in a circle and rolling a ball to each other - don't insist that the children must use each other's names, but model the names for them so that they hear them
- Plan an activity where a familiar sound is either made then and there or a recorded sound is played back - can the children identify what sound it is and match it to a real object or picture?



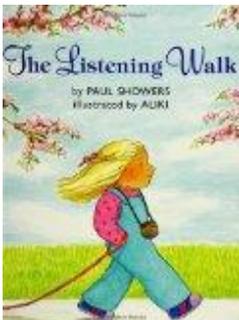
If you are using small resources to make sounds as in the 'Matching Sound Game', make sure the children are always supervised

Speech, Language and Communication 3-4 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could do

- Model being a listener - give eye contact, get down to the child's level, and repeat back what children tell you, adding a few extra words
- Say a child's name before expecting them to give you their attention and listen
- Repeat instructions, breaking them down into their separate parts and in the order that they should happen - 'wash your hands... now you can have snack', 'put on your coat... now you can play outside'
- Use cues when moving from one topic of conversation into another - e.g. 'we've finished talking about... now we are going to talk about...'
- When singing or saying rhymes, talk about similarities in the rhyming words and how they sound the same - you could make up alternative rhyming words for songs 'Hickory Dickory look, the mouse ran up the... book!'
- Go on a listening walk - talk about the things that you hear - you could take photos, draw pictures or use a checklist of the things that you heard



Speech, Language and Communication 3-4 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could provide

- A quiet and calm environment - keep background noise to a minimum
- Time for small group activities of 3 to 4 children - don't sit for too long -the highest quality experiences might be 'short and often'!
- Plan an activity where a child's voice or a familiar sound is recorded and then played back - can the children identify whose voice it is or what sound it is?
- Set up a sound table with interesting sound makers - model how to talk about the sounds that the items make
- Introduce 'take home' bags containing books and songs with props - encourage 'Special Time' where parents take 5-10 minutes out of the usual routine to explore the bag with their child
- Set up everyday items in inviting ways - e.g. hang spoons of different sizes - what noise do they make?
- Play games that involve listening for a signal such as 'Simon Says' and 'ready, steady... go!'
- During activities, singing and story time you can draw attention to the initial sounds in words - the child does not need to say these sounds, but if you are emphasising the sound they will have a great opportunity to hear them



Speech, Language and Communication 4-5 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could do

- Use opportunities to listen carefully for environmental sounds and talk about what you hear. Use descriptive words to talk about the sounds (e.g. long, short, loud, soft, jingly, tappy)
- Extend their skills by increasing the length and complexity of instructions. Play a game where the children need to listen carefully and give instructions that include descriptive words (e.g. 'find me the big square brick...') and location words (e.g. '... and put it behind the sparkly box') - this should be a fun game, not a test!
- Ask the children to show you how well they can listen by remembering all the sounds they hear in a short amount of time (e.g. 30 seconds) - in the indoor environment you might like to make sounds for them to listen to; in the outdoor environment you could listen for the sounds that occur naturally
- Collect objects that rhyme (e.g. hat, bat, mat, toy rat, toy cat) or have the same first sound (e.g. bat, ball, box, banana) and make rhyming soup with a bowl and wooden spoon. In a small group invite each child to choose an object to go in the soup. After each turn you could sing the 'silly soup' song (to the tune of Pop Goes The Weasel) - 'We're making lots of silly soup, we're making soup that's silly, we're going to cook it in the fridge to make it nice and chilly... in goes a cat... a rat... a hat...'



Speech, Language and Communication 4-5 years

Attention and Listening

What adults could provide

- A quiet and calm environment - keep background noise to a minimum; it is difficult for young children to learn to listen when there are distractions
- During activities, singing and story time you can draw attention to the initial sounds in words - the child does not need to say these sounds, but if you are emphasising the sound they will have a great opportunity to hear them and they may have a go themselves
- Time for small group activities of 3 to 4 children - don't sit for too long - the highest quality experiences might be 'short and often'!
- Play games that involve listening for a signal such as 'Simon Says' and 'ready, steady... go!'



- Sound Lotto - children have real objects, photographs or pictures in front of them and they need to identify the one that matches the sound they have heard - e.g. animal noises, transport noises, everyday sounds, instruments

