



How to Help Children with Listening and Attention Difficulties

What are listening and attention difficulties?

Children with these difficulties may have some of the following characteristics:

- Appears to ignore you
- Cannot sit still
- Talks when he should be listening
- Cannot tell you what you have been talking about
- Does not appear to know what to do
- Can only concentrate on one thing
- Is easily distracted
- Does not settle with one toy, but flits from activity to activity

General Strategies

- Decrease environmental noises and distractions as far as possible, e.g. close windows and doors to reduce noise from the playground/other classrooms, turn off any computers not being used, avoid having tables cluttered with objects which may be a distraction.
- Consider where to position a child to provide optimum support. Sit children near the front of the class if you have difficulty keeping their attention. They will be nearer to you and the board, and there are less distractions!
- Sit in a position where your face is visible to the child and maintain good eye contact with them while you are speaking.
- Always gain the child's attention before speaking to them by using some or all of the following strategies
 - Gaining eye contact,
 - Saying their name (verbal prompt)
 - Touching their arm (physical prompt)
- Use visual aids for example, objects/pictures/gestures to help draw the children's attention to the most important parts of what you are saying. Allow them time to process the information you are giving. Making information as visual as possible will help the child keep their attention on task.

Specific Strategies

- Teach the 'Rules of Good Listening' to the children and involve them in discussing why the rules are important. The rules are:
 - Look at the person talking
 - Listen with your ears
 - Think about the words being said
 - Sit still
- Display posters of the 'Rules of Good Listening' in class.
- Individual children may find a 'Rules of Good Listening' bookmark useful.
- Remind the children of the listening rules before the times when they need to listen in class.
- Refer to the rules specifically when praising children (e.g. ' good looking Carl!') as well as when trying to correct poor behaviour.
- Use a star chart or reward system to reward examples of good listening. Make it clear to the child/class when and why they are being rewarded for good listening/attention.

Activities

- Listening Lotto games (see Resources section below)
- 'I went to market and I bought....' game
- Simon Says
- Tell a story and give the children pictures of characters/ words which will come up in the story. Each child has to listen carefully, and hold their card up when their word is said e.g. Tell a story about a farm, and each child has a picture of a different animal.

Useful resources:

'Listening Skills' available from Winslow: www.winslowresources.com

'Tune into Animal Sounds' also available from Winslow

'Sounds Fun' game available from LDA www.ldalearning.com

'Language through listening' (WIG2) available from:

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Useful websites:

- www.speakupsalford.nhs.uk This is the website for the SRFT Speech and Language Therapy department in Salford. It contains further information and advice.
- www.rcslt.org This is the website for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.
- www.talkingpoint.org.uk This is a useful website for parents and teachers. It contains information and advice.
- www.afasic.org.uk This is a parent led organisation that offers information and advice. There are areas on the website for professionals also.

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