

Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: Learning to listen

To provide activities and techniques to improve your child's ability to listen to sounds in their environment.

When a child begins to learn how to talk they must attend to the sounds in their environment. It is important for a child to develop good listening skills in order for them to listen to their environment and learn from it. By improving their ability to listen to these sounds, children will increase their learning and success in the classroom environment.

Activities to increase your child's listening abilities:

In the home:

- 1) **Play a listening game**, sit quietly in a room of your house and take turns identifying sounds you can hear e.g. taps dripping, creaking doors or ticking clocks.
- 2) **Make a scrap book**, or cut out pictures you find in a magazine, stick them into your scrap book and talk about the noise they make. Try and make the noises as you paste them into your scrap book.
- 3) **Play with toys**, and make their noises as you play with them. Encourage your child to listen and imitate the noises. As your child improves at this, hide a toy behind your back and make its noise, see if your child can identify what toy you are hiding and have them imitate the sound.
- 4) For very young children, ensure you have **lots of auditory stimulus around them**, so plenty of toys which squeak, rattle or make noises will encourage listening skills.



Everyday situations:

- 1) Take your child to the zoo, and talk about the animal noises as you wander around. Talk about all the different noises and what animals make that noise.
- 2) Listen for unusual sounds in the environment and encourage your child to point the sounds out to you e.g. how a coffee machine sounds, or a squeaky wheel on a trolley.

3) Go for a walk through a park or reserve, talk about all the things you can hear e.g. birds, wind in the trees, planes or cars. Create a game and count how many things you can hear.

Music:

1) Use musical instruments to follow along to songs on the radio, or play a song from a CD. Ask your child to follow the sounds that they hear.

2) For very young children make sure you have toys that play music or songs to encourage listening.

3) Try karaoke, sing along to tapes and watch television programs that play children's songs.

4) Make your own musical instruments and play them e.g. fill glasses with different amounts of water and make up your own tunes.



Listening to the difference between sounds:

Once your child is improving at identifying sounds in their environment, ask them to identify the differences in the sounds. Talk about the sounds being loud/quiet, high or low pitched.

1) As you walk around a shopping centre talk about the sounds you can hear, start introducing the concepts loud and quiet e.g. "can you hear the cars outside they sound quiet, but all these people's voices together sound loud".

2) Play a guessing game, ask your child to close their eyes while you make a sound and see if they can guess the sound. Once they have achieved this give them two sounds, and ask them to identify the sounds and what makes them different.

3) Create a 'sounds' book, have pages with 'loud' 'quiet' 'high' and 'low' written on them and get your child to cut out pictures and stick them on the right page e.g. a kettle could be stuck on a loud page.

