

# Developing Early Listening Skills



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There are many ways we can help children learn to improve their listening skills and enjoy it!

Many young children have difficulties in learning good listening skills. This is particularly true if your child has a hearing loss. One in four children under five has 'glue ear'. This means if a child has a cold, their hearing levels are reduced.

Building up good listening skills in a child's early years means the child has a good foundation for developing a range of other important skills such as:

- recognising sounds;
- building up spoken language;
- following instructions;
- developing social relationships;
- communicating well with others;  
and
- learning rhymes and songs.

These skills lead on to gaining literacy and numeracy skills.



# Developing an awareness of sound

Let your child play with a range of musical instruments, either bought or homemade. Different types of beans or pulses (**never** raw kidney beans) put in clear water bottles with the lid securely fastened make good shakers so the child hears a range of different sounds. (Always make sure you supervise your child.)



You can:

- listen for sounds in the environment and tell and show your child what the sounds are (for example, the dustbin lorry, a doorbell);



- sing and share lots of songs and rhymes with your child (babies love the sound of their mother's voice);
- use wooden spoons and saucepans to make music;



- use bath toys to make sounds in the water and draw attention to these different sounds;
- scrunch different kinds of paper or bubble wrap together;

- encourage your child to clap or bang, then copy the number of claps or bangs;



- use balls with bells in or ones that make sounds to attract attention when rolling a ball; and



- use a musical instrument to make a sound and encourage your child to find the correct instrument to copy the sound;



- find the hidden noise (for example, hide a musical toy under a cloth and help your child find it).

- use toys and puppets to play games (for example, 'naughty teddy' waking up a toy or adult);
- use rhymes like 'Old Macdonald had a farm' and encourage your child to find the appropriate animal for each verse;

Learning to wait for a signal is a very important skill.

- Play 'Ready steady, go' games and encourage your child to wait for the signal.
- Change the 'go' for a sound like a bell or a musical instrument as the signal.



- Reverse roles and let your child tell you when to 'go'.



# Listening and talking

Children learn how to talk through hearing others talk and imitating what they hear. It is important to help your child learn to copy the sounds they hear around them.

You can do the following.

- Copy your child's early sounds back to them and show them they are important.
- Let your child help you with routine tasks and tell them what they are doing (for example, give them a duster or let them put some shopping away).
- Help your child become more independent by fetching things for you. (For example, you say, "We're going out, go and get your coat." Make sure the object is close and easy to see at first. When they are doing that well, you can add on shoes).

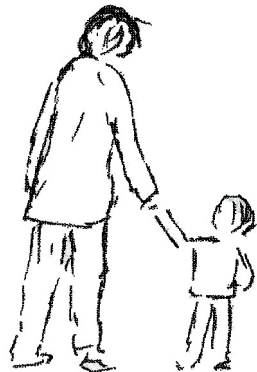


- Ask your child to find named pictures. Use lots of praise to keep the activity fun.
- Play games with toys (for example, washing teddy, naming the different body parts washed or putting dolly to bed while talking about the bedtime routine). Using Mr Potato Head is a good way of teaching body parts.



These are just some ideas to help develop early listening skills. You can use everyday objects and you can easily make instruments at home. Please do be careful with small objects and don't leave them with your child.

All these activities should be fun. Talk to your speech and language therapist, Portage home visitor or health visitor if you need any more ideas, and get advice if you have any concerns about your child's hearing.



This booklet has been developed by Barking and Dagenham Portage in consultation with Barking and Dagenham Educational Psychology Service.

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