

## Why is it important?

The importance of listening skills cannot be underestimated. Attention control is an area in which many children with delayed language skills have difficulties. Often these children have not yet developed dual channelled attention. This means that they are unable to follow spoken instructions whilst doing a task without stopping to look at the speaker. As a result, they find it difficult to follow instructions fully in the classroom where directions are often given to the whole class. Children can struggle to 'stay on task' and find it difficult to sustain their attention. They are often easily distracted by things they can see and hear in the classroom.



## Strategies to support attention and listening skills

### 1. Good Listening:

Make listening an **active process**. The child needs to take responsibility for listening and understanding what is said to them.

Teach the **rules of listening**

- sit still
- look at the person who is talking
- think about the words.

Use role play and **clear feedback** to enable the child to learn these rules. For example, "your hands are still and you are looking at me so I know you are listening".

**Reward** good listening. Choose an appropriate reward system that is highly motivating for the child e.g. try a sticker chart

2. Make sure you have the child's attention prior to giving instructions, by calling his/her name and getting down to their eye level.
3. Break instructions down into small, clear steps. Be aware of difficult vocabulary.

4. Back up instructions with visual support e.g. symbols, pictures, lists of key words, visual timetable.
5. Discard irrelevant materials/cover up other parts of the book not required.
6. It can be helpful to use an egg-timer or similar means of timing to show the child how long they will need to stay on task.
7. Be aware of other auditory/visual distractions and remove or reduce them wherever possible.
8. Encourage the child to repeat the instruction back to you. This will enable you to check that they have listened accurately.

## **Resources**

Below is a list of resources to support the development of listening and attention:

'Language and Listening Games for Small Groups' by Judith Thomas.

You could also use the following from Learning Materials Ltd.:

- Pictures in Sound
- Sound Discrimination
- Sound Lotto.