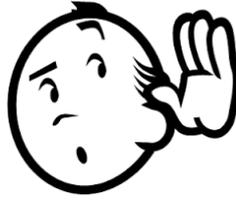


Are you listening?

Listening is not the same as hearing! Just because a child can hear something doesn't mean they understand what they have heard. Listening involves a child being able to attend to and process what they have heard. This is an essential skill for learning new words, as well as for social and academic development.



Children learn to listen from a very young age. Even from as young as 3mths of age, infants begin to listen and recognize their parent's voices, and can tell the difference between a friendly and angry voice.

As children get older, they can often get distracted by many things around them eg. TV, music, people, background noise, a favorite toy. These distractions may mean that they miss out on hearing what has been said to them. If this happens frequently, then a child may miss out on valuable learning opportunities for learning new concepts and vocabulary.

Here are some strategies to help your child to learn to listen and attend:

- Get your child's attention first before you give a direction eg. say their name, touch their shoulder
- Make sure your child is looking at you when you are talking
- Turn off background noise (eg. TV, music) when talking with your child and reading books
- Ask your child to repeat back to you what they have been asked to do or what they have heard
- Practice sitting at the table together and completely finish one activity before moving onto another activity. Start with a short activity, then gradually increase the length of the task.

Children who experience chronic ear infections are particularly at risk of poor listening skills, so it is important to see your GP if you have any concerns about your child's hearing and/or ear infections.

If you're concerned about your child's speech and language development or any of the above areas, contact a speech pathologist to discuss whether assessment for your child is indicated.

What to expect at different ages for listening skills

1-2 years

- Listens to simple stories
- Understands simple questions eg. *where's Mum?*
- Follows directions to find familiar objects

2-3 years

- Follows 2 step directions
- Follows direction to point to body parts

3-4 years

- Understands wh- questions eg *where, who, what*
- Understands most simple questions about their activities and environment
- Begins to learn from listening

4-5 years

- Attends to short stories and answers simple questions about it
- Hears and understands most of what is said at home and kindly
- Responds to a greater variety of questions eg. *what's happening, what will happen next?*

5-6 years

- Follows 3-step directions
- Repeats sentences up to nine words in length
- Responds to more abstract questions eg. *why do you like it, what will happen if...?*



Marion Langdon
Paediatric Speech Pathologist

0402 070 299
kidsinthehills.sp@gmail.com

PO Box 397, Ferny Hills DC Qld 4055
Ferny Fair Shopping Plaza
170 Patricks Rd, Ferny Hills

www.kidsinthehillsspeech.com
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