



## Supporting your child with their listening skills

**This leaflet provides useful information for parents, carers or teachers to use when communicating with a child or young person.**

### How does listening differ from hearing?

Good hearing is important to support our listening; however, hearing and listening can be described as two separate abilities.

Hearing is the ability to detect sounds whilst listening is the ability to pay attention to these sounds. A child's listening ability will differ depending on their age and level of development. Often children with normal hearing may find that they need support whilst they continue to develop their listening abilities.

Listening in children can be affected by various factors, these can include:

- Physical factors such as health, wellbeing and tiredness
- The time of the day; some children may be better focused and attentive in the morning whilst others later in the day
- The length of time for which your child needs to focus
- The type of activity and whether your child finds it interesting
- Your child's understanding of language and level of development

### Tactics to support your child's listening skills:

To help with improving listening skills in the **home** we would encourage you to try the following tactics:

- **Reducing background noise:** Background noise will compete with important sounds like your voice and so impact listening ability. Where possible aim to remove or reduce the background noise before talking to your child
- **Gaining attention:** Try to ensure you have your child's attention before you talk to them. You can gain their attention by saying their name, tapping their arm or hand and removing any distractions. It's also best to make sure you are facing your child as being face to face helps with visual cues
- **Provide brief instructions:** Children can find it challenging to process large amounts of information. You can help your child by providing short instructions and speaking slowly to allow time for them to process what is being said
- **Allow time for processing:** Your child will need sufficient time to process what they hear; for some children it may take a little longer to respond to questions or offer their own answers
- **Rephrase rather than repeat:** It can be natural to want to repeat yourself if your child has not understood or heard what you may have asked. Instead try rephrasing what you have said or even asking your child what they think they have heard and filling in the gaps instead of repeating full sentences again

If your child requires support with their listening skills in **school**, we recommend trying the tactics below. We would encourage you to discuss these with your child's teacher to see what support they may be able to offer:

- **Classroom placement:** Ask for your child to be placed at the front of the classroom so they are nearer to their teacher. This can help improve listening ability and reduce distraction. Try to sit them away from visual and auditory distractions such as heaters, fans, windows or doors
- **Reducing classroom noise:** Although not always possible, advise teachers to wait for the room to be reasonably quiet before giving instructions and consider gaining attention before giving new instructions
- **Offering visual aids:** Visual aids such as timetables, charts and pictures can support understanding and offer reassurance for what is happening next. Demonstrations of activities or writing key points on the board can also support auditory memory
- **Individual checking:** Subtle yet regular checking of understanding by the teacher, teaching assistant or a peer can be helpful in ensuring your child is following along
- **Quiet study areas:** Children can find it harder to process information when there is background noise. Although this cannot always be avoided, access to quieter tables or less busy areas of the classroom can help

## To summarise:

Hearing and listening are two different skills. A child's ability to listen and attend to sounds can be affected by a range of factors such as age, development or distractions. The suggestions and tactics recommended above can support your child with their developing listening abilities.

Paediatric Audiology Department  
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital  
Bordesley Green East, Birmingham, B9 5SS

Telephone: **0121 424 1846**

Email: [paediatricaudiology@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:paediatricaudiology@uhb.nhs.uk)

## Accessibility

To view this information in a different language or use text-to-speech reader visit **[www.uhb.nhs.uk](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk)**, click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille, please email **[interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk)**.



## How did we do? 😊 😐 😞

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you. [www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft)**

