



Early Interventions Speech, Language and Communication

Listening and Attention

What is Listening and Attention?

Listening

- Listening is more than just the act of hearing – it is focusing on what has been heard.
- Good listening is necessary to understanding what someone is saying.
- Learning to listen and attend are essential foundation skills, children need to learn how to listen.

Attention

- Attention is the ability to select what to focus on at the same time as excluding other stimuli in the environment.
- Attention is a prerequisite to learning language.
- Attention develops in recognisable stages, everyone functions at these stages at different times.

How Does Listening & Attention Develop?

Stage	Listening and Attention
0-11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. • Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. • Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention.
8-20 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. • Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. • Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. Has a strong exploratory impulse.



Stage	Listening and Attention
16-26 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. • Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. • Rigid attention – may appear not to hear.
22-36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. (by 36 months) • Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. • Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.
30-50 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them. • Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. • Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. • Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention. • Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).
40-60+ months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions. • Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate. • Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. • Integrated attention – can listen and do in range of situations