



SLT Top Tips for supporting Attention and Listening

Attention and listening skills are important foundation skills for language and learning. Paying attention involves concentrating on an activity and integrating information from different sources (e.g. what you see and what you hear). At the same time, you have to be able to self-regulate and ignore irrelevant information (i.e. not become distracted). This can be a challenging skill for many children and young people. Here are some **ideas** for **strategies** that can help:

- Get your child's attention by saying their **name** and getting down to **their level**/ establishing eye contact before giving them information.
- Before giving your child an instruction, cue them in for **whole-body listening** by reminding them to look with their eyes, listen with their ears, have quiet hands, and a still body.
- Use **simple concrete language**-giving **one step** instructions or one piece of information at a time.
- Use **visuals** to help support your spoken language (e.g. use gestures/signs, objects, or pictures to show your child what you are talking about).
- Give your child **extra time** to process spoken information and respond.
- Visual aids such as **Visual Timetables, First-then boards, I am working for/Star charts** can be useful for helping children stay on task.

- Try to keep challenging activities **short** and alternate with motivating activities (e.g. First-reading, Then-music).
- Giving a **countdown** (e.g. 'five more left and then we take a break') can be reassuring for children as it helps them to know what to expect.
- When possible try to adapt activities to make them more motivating for your child based on their **interests and preferences** (e.g. if they have to do a reading task, you could try to find a book in the library about one of their favourite characters).
- When possible try to **reduce environmental distractions** if your child has to carry out a challenging activity (e.g. minimising noise during homework time).
- Provide **positive reinforcement** and specific feedback (e.g. 'you're doing great listening', 'I like how you are sitting and looking at me').
- Consider **other factors** which may impact on your child's attention (e.g. fatigue, medication, seizures, time of day). Try to work out are there **particular times of day** that work better for your child for focusing their attention on challenging tasks.
- If your child has sensory needs speak to your OT for advice about strategies which will help support their regulation for focusing their attention.
- If your child has emotional or behavioural needs which are impacting on their attention and concentration speak to your Psychologist for advice.
- Talk to your SLT for further advice and activities for supporting your child's attention and listening for language and communication development.