

## Attention, Listening and Memory - strategies and activities

### Strategies for school and parents:

- Ensure your child is listening before giving them an instruction - Say their **name**, **gain eye contact** with them and prompt them to **look and listen**.
- Provide your child with regular prompts to listen and attend during structured activities.
- Ensure background noise is kept to a minimum and minimise distractions before giving an instruction.
- Give your child extra time to respond when they have been asked a question/given an instruction. Wait for at least 3 full seconds.
- Keep instructions, as short and simple as possible. Say them in the order you want them done and try to avoid before/after. Give them step by step, pausing between each step.
- When giving your child an instruction encourage them to repeat out loud what they have to do before doing it.
- If you need to repeat the information do not rephrase it but say it exactly as you said it the first time – short and simple.
- Present new information and learning with an increased amount of visual support e.g., diagrams, pictures, videos, charts or with practical exploration.
- Give your child specific praise for good attention and listening skills.
- Provide your child with multi-sensory learning experiences, e.g., introduce new topics using objects create a multi-sensory learning experience – so your child can touch, feel , see, smell, taste and hear new vocabulary items.
- Give your child frequent reminders about the task at hand.
- Set **time limits** for your child to complete tasks (make these more achievable to start with). Use a timer of some sort to help the children be visually aware of the progress of time e.g. sand timer.
- Try to **alternate between listening / quiet tasks** and more active ones (allow energy release between activities e.g. outdoor activities).
- Include regular summaries of new teaching, as your child may have forgotten the beginning of the teaching by the time you reach the end. Give key information at the beginning and summarise at the end – continue to encourage your child to write down what they need to do.

**Strategies the child can use - *always provide them with specific praise when they use any of these strategies:***

- If the instruction contains more than one part encourage them to say the instruction out loud and count on their fingers what he has to do (see poster).
- When giving your child a task to do, encourage them to bullet point the key points down before starting (in their book or on a white board) and then prompt them to tick them off when he's finished each one. This can be a whole class strategy to avoid drawing attention to your child. Alternatively you could write the key instructions clearly on the board and prompt the class to refer to it.
- Encourage your child to ask for help, ask for information to be repeated and to say when they don't understand.

**Activities:**

Play games with your child throughout the day where they have to listen and pay attention to what you're saying:

- **I Spy**
- **Simon Says** - you can make the instructions longer and more complex, e.g., containing 2 or 3 parts.
- **Treasure hunt** - Describe everyday items to them and get them to go around the house looking for these items, e.g. *'Something that is round, begins with 'b' and can bounce'*. You can make the descriptions easier or harder, based on their level of ability - Try not to make it too hard or they might lose motivation.
- **Kims Game**  
Put 4-6 objects on a tray and ask your child to look at them carefully. Next, ask your child to turn around while you take one object away. Can they remember which one has gone? *You can increase the number of items to make it harder or decrease them to make it easier.*
- **I went to the shops and I bought...** Take it in turns to add an extra item, e.g., first person: I went to the shops and I bought an **apple**. Next person: I went to the shops and I bought an **apple** and a **banana**.
- **Read books together** - get them to listen out for when you make a mistake/say something silly. You can also encourage them to re-tell the story and answer questions about what has happened and what might happen next - e.g., **who** was in the story, **where** was it set, **what happened**, what was the **problem**, etc.

*The below activities will support your child to become an **active listener** (i.e., fully concentrating on everything that is said to them, being able to identify key points and also identify when they have not understood something and why (e.g., instruction too fast, too long, contains words he doesn't understand etc).*

When teaching your child a skill to support their attention and listening skills - always prompt them to generalise these skills into everyday life interactions, so it becomes habit for them.

### Short texts for Practising Structured Listening

**Before each story ask the child / young person to listen out for one of the following**

- **Who is in the story**
- **Where are they**
- **What is happening**

**Then read the story and ask the child for the information they have been listening out for. Initially only ask the for one thing, then gradually increase the difficulty by asking them to listen for 2 or all 3 bits of information, leading up to them being able to tell you the story after you have read it.**

**Once they have grasped the whole story work on in-depth understanding by asking**

- **Why did this happen (make questions specific to the story, e.g. why do people steal things? Why did the seagull fly to the picnic bag? Why was Katie worried?)**
- **How are the people feeling?**
- **What will they do next? What will be a good thing to do next?**

✚ Last Thursday three boys were passing a jeweller's shop in town. They noticed a man running out of the front door stuffing something in his pocket. He jumped into a waiting car and drove off.

✚ Matt and Katie were on holiday. They were having a picnic on the beach. Suddenly a large seagull swooped down, poked at the picnic bag and flew off with two doughnuts in his beak.

- ✚ Katie was searching the grass at the edge of the playing field because she had lost her key. She was worried because her mum was at work and she could not get into the house. Suddenly she saw something shiny in the grass.
- ✚ Ellie was waiting for the school bus. It was cold and wet and the bus was very late. Her dad said, that he was fed up with waiting. "I think I'll get the car out now" he said. "I don't want you to be late for school."
- ✚ There were 4 eggs in the nest. A crack appeared in one of them. After a while the egg split open and a tiny bird came out. At first it wobbled a bit, when it tried to walk, then it opened its eyes and looked at the sunshine.
- ✚ The lioness dozed in the sun. Around her the four cubs played with each other. Suddenly her nose twitched and she jumped to her feet. She got ready to pounce to get some food for her young ones.
- ✚ Once upon a time there was a princess who was very rich, very pretty and very grumpy. She didn't have any friends because she always shouted at the other children. One day she was in her beautiful garden being bored. Suddenly there was a rustling noise. When she looked there was a tiny little man no taller than her knee.
- ✚ Dan and his mum were shopping in the supermarket. He was getting bored, because his mum took a long time. So he looked at the sweets. When he found something he liked he turned round to tell his mum, but when he looked his mum seemed to have disappeared.
- ✚ Louise was feeling very nervous about being in the show. Her mouth was dry and she felt sure that she would forget her lines. Then the curtains opened and somebody pushed her gently from behind.
- ✚ It was Millie's first day at her new school. She had a new school uniform and mum had bought her a new bag. She was a little nervous but mum had said that she would make lots of new friends. As she walked into the classroom the teacher smiled at her and said "Welcome to your new school. Come and sit down and meet the children in this class."
- ✚ Louise was spending a day at her auntie's house. She had found a very interesting box with old clothes which were perfect for dressing up. She tried on some shoes and a big purple hat. Then she saw a sparkly purse at the bottom of the box. When she opened it a big silver coin fell out.

## INSTRUCTIONS WITH UNFAMILIAR VOCABULARY

I'm going to say some instructions. When I tell you one with words you understand, do what I tell you to do. When I say ones you don't understand because it has some words you don't know, say, "I don't understand".

1. Turn and look at the back wall.
2. Pull up your socks and raffen your shirt. *I don't understand.*
3. Look at me and smile.
4. Tell me if you feel shum today. *I don't understand.*
5. Get a piece of paper and a pencil and draw a shrelka for me. *I don't understand.*
6. Count to five quickly.
7. Tell me what colour a plam is. *I don't understand.*
8. If you are in school, nod your head.
9. pretend you are chuffing an ice-cream cone. *I don't understand.*
10. After you rub your hands together, fold them.
11. I want you to tell me if it's guffy outside today. *I don't understand.*
12. Draw a circle in the air with your finger.
13. Plam the top of your head with your hand. *I don't understand.*
14. If there is a pencil sharpener in this room, point to it.
15. After I snap my fingers, you snap yours. (Snap).
16. Walk upply to the window. *I don't understand.*
17. Make a fist and kipe it on your desk/the table. *I don't understand.*
18. Point to the roof of your mouth.
19. Touch your leg with your right hand.
20. Go to the board and draw two spaggly lines. *I don't understand.*
21. Stand up and put your hands on your hips.
22. Tell me what number cones after twenty-scrubble. *I don't understand.*

## INAUDIBLE INSTRUCTIONS

I'm going to tell you some instructions. When you hear all of it , do what I tell you to do. When you don't hear all of it, say, "Will you please say that again? (say the word/s underlined in a quiet or unclear voice)

1. Stand up and then jump two times.
2. I want you to clap your hands. *Will you please say that again?*
3. Say the name of your school.
4. Pretend you are eating a lolly ice. *Will you please say that again?*
5. Look behind you.
6. Say the number that comes after four. *Will you please say that again?*
7. When I say "okay", I want you to blink your eyes. (Wait.) Okay.
8. Put your hands on your knees.
9. Make a funny face.
10. Say "no" three times. *Will you please say that again?*
11. If there is a light in this room, point to it.
12. Try to stand on one foot. *Will you please say that again?*
13. Close your eyes and count to ten. *Will you please say that again?*
14. Touch your nose and then touch your chin. *Will you please say that again?*
15. Smile without showing your teeth.
16. If there is a teacher in this room, say "yes". *Will you please say that again?*
17. Stand up and whisper your name.
18. Tell me what you ate for breakfast this morning. *Will you please say that again?*
19. If you can hear what I'm saying, nod your head "yes".
20. Put your hands behind your back.
21. Show me how you look when you are sad. *Will you please say that again?*
22. Cover your mouth with both hands.
23. Will you please look at me and say "hello"
24. Pull up your socks and then touch your shoes. *Will you please say that again?*
25. Touch the floor and then touch the back of your head. *Will you please say that again?*

## CLEAR/UNCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

I'm going to tell you some instructions. When I say one that you don't understand or shouldn't do, say, "I can't do that or I don't understand".

When I say a good one you can do it

1. Stand up and close your eyes.
2. Walk around in a circle.
3. Go and break a window. (*I shouldn't*).
4. Look at the person next to you.
5. Point to the board.
6. Will you please touch the ceiling. (*I can't*).
7. Pick up your desk with your ear. (*I can't*).
8. Take a deep breath and then blow it out.
9. Scratch your head, then touch your nose.
10. Shake hands with a person next to you.
11. Count backwards from a million. (*I can't*).
12. Take my keys and drive my car. (*I can't*).
13. Tell me what colour your eyes are.
14. Tear up a piece of paper and throw it all over the floor. (*I shouldn't*).
15. I want you to say your name quietly.
16. Run home and then run back here again. (*I can't/shouldn't*)
17. Tell me everyone's name in this school. (*I can't*)
18. Please pretend that you are brushing your hair.
19. Walk over to someone and step on his foot. (*I shouldn't*)
20. Draw a circle in the air with your finger.
21. I'd like you to point to your knee.
22. After you clap your hands, go break someone's pencil. (*I shouldn't*)
23. Before you get up, carry your chair to the door. (*I can't*)

## MEMORY TRICKS

1. Count the things you need to remember on your fingers, e.g., get your bag and your coat and line up by the door.



2. Say the things you need to remember out loud



3. Ask for instructions to be repeated if you need to hear it again.



