

Resource

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

How to use games to develop attention and listening.



Why?

- Developing children's attention and listening skills is the foundation for learning and effective communication.
- These simple activities can help develop a child's attention, listening, turn taking and interaction skills.
- These activities can be adapted for 1:1 or small group settings.

How?

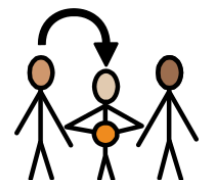
Ready, Steady, Go Games

Say 'ready, steady' and encourage the child to wait for 'go' before they do an activity e.g. knocking down a tower, rolling a ball, pushing a car, going down a slide, shaking a musical instrument etc.



Turn Taking Games

Take turns to play motivating games such as posting, fishing, feely bag and toys with buttons, lights or sounds.



Run and Touch

Give instructions such as 'run to the gate'. Gradually increase the number of objects to touch e.g. 'run to the gate and then the climbing frame'.



Action Songs and Rhymes

Encourage the child to join in with songs and rhymes. Pause to encourage the child to finish a phrase e.g. practitioner 'Twinkle, twinkle little...' child – '...star'.



Motivating Sensory Activities

Use sensory activities to support listening and attention e.g. sieving flour, glitter or salt onto black card, dribbling paint onto paper etc. Encourage the child to watch the activity and make engaging sounds such as 'wheeee', 'splat'.



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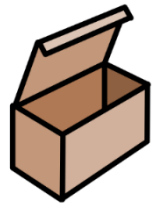
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Position Games

Have a range of boxes and gift bags. Hide a motivating object and ask 'Where's ___?' This links to lift the flap books like, 'Where's Spot?'

What's in the box?

Put exciting sensory toys in a box such as bubbles, slinky, wind- up toys etc. Sing "What's in the box?" and children take turns at opening the box and talking about what they have chosen.



Where's teddy?

Hide a stuffed toy with only a small part of their body visible. Ask the child/ren to cover their eyes while you hide the teddy, e.g. under your arm. Instruct them to open their eyes and find the teddy. This activity helps children to pay more attention to visual details in their immediate environment.



Puzzles

Give children pieces to collectively make up a whole puzzle. Each member has a turn to add a piece. You can either call out their names or go around in circle taking turns.



Books

Share books but each child takes a turn at turning a page and commenting on it. If this is a 1:1 activity the child just takes turns with the adult. Choose simple books preferably with one picture per page. Try interactive books with flaps and buttons. If a child is unable to sit through a whole book, note down how many pages they can sit through. Next time read an additional page until they are able to sit through the whole book.



Posting Box

Post objects / pictures in turns. Either say the name of the object / picture and children take it in turns to post or give each child a small collection of pictures / objects for them to name and post.



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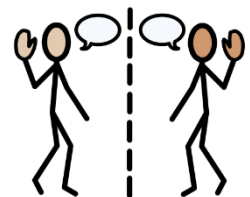
Kim's Game

You will need a selection of common objects, a cloth and a tray. Put 2 objects (increase up to 4- 5) e.g. toy pig, sheep, dog, duck and tell the children to look at and remember what is there. Allow them to look for a minute and then cover with a cloth and remove an object. Ask the children what is missing.



Simons Says

Adults and children take turns in saying 'Simon says...touch your head'. Use simple actions that everyone in the group has to carry out when they hear.



Musical Instruments

This game is played by using two sets of identical instruments. These can be real or home-made instruments. Go through the instruments to model the sounds it can make. Then hide the instruments behind a screen. Play one of the instruments and see if they can select the same instrument from their set. Extend by seeing if the child can copy the number, length or sequence of beats you make.



Ball Games

Pass the ball and the child says their name. This activity helps children practice introducing themselves, giving eye contact, being aware of other children and taking turns.



Musical Bumps / Actions

Have the child dance to music and sit down quickly when the music stops. Adapt by making up a set of actions to go with certain sounds. When you make the sounds the child must carry out the corresponding action. Once your child is able to respond consistently then increase difficulty by making similar sounds, meaning they will have to listen much more carefully.



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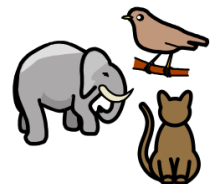
Shopping Game

Put four to six common objects on a table, e.g. a cup, plate, apple, doll. The adult and child sit one metre away from the table. The adult holds a shopping bag/basket and asks the child to get for example, the cup and the apple. The child is required to listen to and follow the instructions. The child gets the items and puts them in the bag/basket. When the child had collected all the items you can have a tea party with the doll.



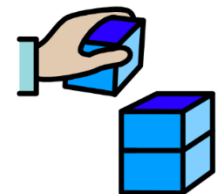
Animal Sounds

Have pictures/models of animals. Show the child a picture and ask them to make the animal sound. Adapt by posting the animal into a box when the sound has been made.



Building a Tower

Take a cardboard tube (the type posters are stored in) and cover it with wrapping paper. Place the upright tube and some bricks in the middle of the group and each child takes a turn to put a brick in the tube as you call their name. If doing it on a 1:1 level, encourage the child to out the brick in as you say ready-steady-go!



Things to note:

- This help sheet is part of the Identifying and Supporting Listening and Attention Toolkit:
How to identify and support listening and attention levels.
[How to use games to develop attention and listening.](#)

Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

Early Years Professional Development Programme 2020

Cooper, Moodley and Reynell Helping Language Development 1978