

Paediatric Hearing Implant Programme

Supporting early listening development

This leaflet explains more about early listening development and suggests ways in which you can help your child's listening skills to develop. It will be supported by explanations from your speech and language therapist and teacher of the deaf who will indicate which areas you should focus on at certain times.

Introduction

People often use the terms "hearing" and "listening" interchangeably but they actually mean different things. **Hearing** involves being physically able to detect sounds. **Listening** involves a more active and conscious response, such as being able to focus on sounds and respond to them in some way.

For children who have difficulty hearing, devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implants are essential as they allow children to gain access to the sounds in their environment. Without these devices, the development of listening skills would not be possible. It is important to remember that devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants must be worn consistently, so that children are provided with the best possible opportunity to learn about sounds and develop good listening skills.

As a parent, it can sometimes be difficult to tell whether your child has heard a sound, unless they give an obvious response such as turning towards the sound or stopping play to listen to a sound. However, there are many instances when your child may be hearing a sound but not really focusing on or responding to it. Reasons for this may include:

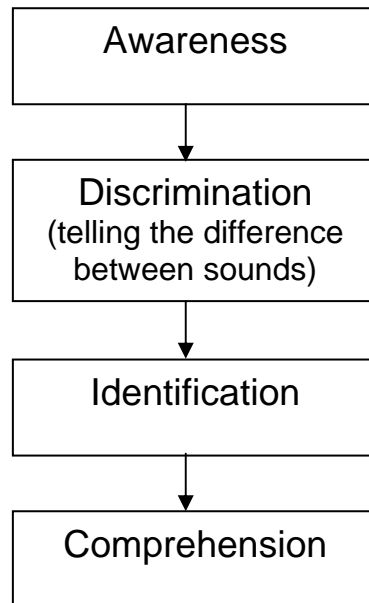
- the sound may have no meaning to them and therefore be of little interest (for example, a phone ringing when they do not understand or use the phone)
- their level of attention may mean that they are easily distracted from listening by other things in their environment before they have a chance to respond
- they may have already responded to the sound once and not be interested in it anymore.

It is likely that these factors will continue to be a feature of your child's listening for much of the early stages of listening development. However, there are many things that you can do to help your child become interested in sounds and learn to listen. This leaflet will give you some guidelines on fun ways to encourage good listening with your child!

Stages of listening

Listening is a skill that develops in stages or levels, starting from the easiest to the most difficult.

There are four levels of listening:



Example 1

Awareness

Phone rings. Child hears a sound and may turn around (clear responses may not be given).

Discrimination

Phone rings. Child can tell this sound is different to the sound the doorbell makes but still not sure which is which.

Identification

Phone rings. Child knows that it is the phone.

Comprehension

Phone rings. Child knows that someone is calling to speak to mum or dad.

Environmental sounds vs. voice

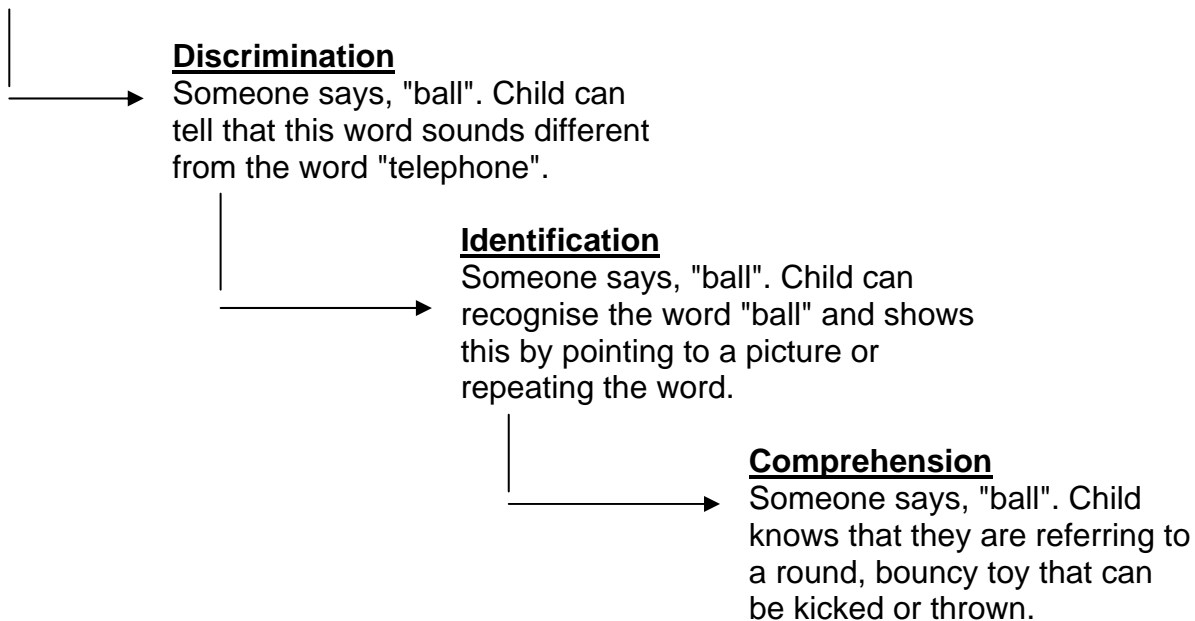
Children generally become aware of environmental sounds first, such as doors banging, dogs barking and musical instruments. As they become better listeners to environmental sounds they also begin to develop an awareness of voices such as a shouted "no" or "go" and their name.

However, it will be a long time before your child is actually able to understand speech as we do. This skill requires a lot of listening experience, as well as a continuing development of language skills.

Example 2

Awareness

Someone says, "ball". Child hears a noise and turns around.



The next section explains in more detail the different stages of listening development, from awareness and discrimination through to identification and comprehension. It also gives you some ideas and activities that you can use to develop your child's listening skills.

1. Awareness: Environmental sounds

This is the first stage in listening development, the stage at which your child first begins to notice sounds in their environment. For children who have had little or no hearing experience, this can be a big step. At first they will need us to bring their attention to the sounds that happen every day in our environment. How can we do this?

Firstly

Draw your child's attention to all the different sounds in their environment. Include noisy sounds such as doors banging, pots clanging, loud TV, dogs barking and cars driving by. Also make sure you point out some quieter sounds such as the toilet flushing, light switches flicking, drawers opening, and soft squeaking toys. Use lots of pointing to show your child the source of each noise and lots of facial expression and comments (for example, "Oooh....that's loud", "That's noisy").

You can also use this as an opportunity to tell your child the word or sign for different things. Try naming before, during and after looking at each object.

Other sound exploration activities...

- Listening walk. Walk around the house and listen to the sounds in each room.
- Sound tins. Put different items (such as pasta) in tins, shake them to hear different sounds.
- Musical instruments.
- Radio (turning the volume up and down).

Games to develop an awareness of when a sound is there and when it's not:

- Musical statues (standing still when the music stops). For babies and toddlers you can dance with them, following the music and stop when the music stops.
- Use the BabyBeats resource that has ideas for moving your baby or toddler with the music.
- Explore noisy toys and instrument; let your child see what makes the noise and enjoy making the noise themselves so they learn about sounds starting and stopping.
- Musical chairs (sitting on a chair when the music stops).

1. Awareness: Voice

To develop an awareness of voice, try these games:

- Peek-a-boo
- Ready-Steady-Go (get your child to wait for you to say go before responding by running, jumping or putting a brick in a box)
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Making animal sounds and transport sounds
- Have sounds and words you use regularly as part of your routines eg 'mmmmm' for delicious food and 'yuk' when they try to eat something inedible.

Remember

When using your voice, it is not just the words that can be different. Try using your voice in different ways. You can make your voice:

- loud or quiet (for example, "Shhh...go to sleep", "WAKE UP")
- use raising or lowering pitch (for example, "up..up..up", "down", when playing with your baby or at the park on swings and slides etc)
- have flat or swooping pitch (for example, crocodile says "ahhh", siren goes "nee-nah-nee-nah")

You can also use toys or pictures to introduce the LING sounds (named after the doctor who created this simple hearing test, for example, /oo/, /ee/, /ah/, /sh/, /s/, /m/). Try using toys or pictures to represent each one (for example, crocodile or plane goes "ahhh").

Additional resources

Your cochlear implant team will have other resources that are useful. They will let you know which ones are best for you and your child such as:

- The book *Early Communication Skills* by Lynch & Kidd
- St Thomas' Hospital, Teacher of the Deaf Handouts
- Books, songs, nursery rhymes, videos.

Remember

You do not always need to put time aside to do specific listening games. Everyday routines and activities are the perfect opportunity to build in listening experiences. Communication happens twenty four hours a day.

2. Discrimination

Once your child is aware of sounds, they can begin to listen to differences between them. At first your child may only be able to discriminate big differences between sounds but they will learn to listen for smaller differences with practice.

Activities to discriminate environmental sounds

- Choose a variety of sound-making toys and draw attention to their differences. If you are using signs, it can be helpful to use the following ones to highlight:
 - Same vs. different (for example, drum vs. drum, drum vs. shaker)
 - Loud vs. quiet (for example, drum, hit loud and quietly)
 - Long vs. short (for example, shaker, long and short time)

- Ongoing vs. repeated/broken (for example, shaker vs. drum).

Activities to discriminate voice/speech sounds

- Making animal or transport noises are particularly good for this. You can use signs to show:
 - Same vs. different (for example, duck "quack quack" vs. cat "miaow")
 - Loud vs. quiet (for example, mouse "squeak squeak" vs. Lion "ROAR")
 - Long vs. short (for example, cow "mooooo" vs. dog "woof")
 - Ongoing vs. repeated (for example, car "brmmm" vs. train "ch ch ch").

Remember

Use lots of facial expressions, signs and gestures to aid your child's developing listening skills. At first they will be relying on these cues to help them tell the difference between sounds. As your child gets better at listening, try fading these out to see how well they can tell the difference with listening alone. For example, you can start to fade out the signs for 'same' and 'different'. Later, try making the sounds behind your child so they can't see you at all.

3. Identification: Young children

As your child's concept of language develops, they start to understand that a word or sign represents a real life object (ball), action (kick) or description (red). It is at this stage that the discrimination skills they have been developing become more meaningful. Your child can now start to identify that one sound goes with, or represents one thing, while a different sound represents something else.

Activities to try

Give your child a choice of two toys. First demonstrate the sound that each toy makes (for example, "mooo" vs. "quack quack"). You may need to do this several times. Then try making one of the sounds and see if your child can tell you which toy it goes with.

When they can do this easily you can make this game more difficult by standing behind your child to make the sound. They will then have to use listening alone to identify which toy. You can also increase the difficulty by having more toys or pictures for your child to choose from.

Some children may try to copy the sounds you make or take turns with you in being the one to say the sounds. This should be encouraged if they are ready for it. However, at this stage the primary focus is on listening and identifying sounds, not saying them correctly.

Remember

Keep games fun and interesting. For most babies and young children they enjoy you spending time with them and playing with them.

For older children you can try posting pictures in a toy post box, stacking bricks or getting a smiley stamp as a reward for each turn. These types of rewards can often keep a child interested in an activity for much longer than they would be otherwise. It is also better to try several short listening games than one long one.

3. Identification: Older Children

For older children who are able to understand some language, you can use real words rather than toys and animal noises. Children who sign will already have a visual representation for words, but at this stage they will develop an auditory representation as well. Signs can be a useful way of linking the vocabulary your child already knows with the spoken word.

Remember to make these games easier at the start by using only two choices. Try using a word vs. a phrase at first as they sound quite different and will be easy for your child to tell apart.

- **Simon Says (or mummy says...)**

Introduce and demonstrate the two choices first, chose a longer phrase to contrast with a short word (for example, "jump up and down" vs. "sit", or "turn round and round" vs. "jump"). Start by standing in front of your child to give the instructions. You can also use signs at first to help them build up confidence. Then, try standing behind them to give the instructions and see if they can tell which one you have said.

- **Picture Cards**

Introduce the words by naming and talking about each picture. You can make this more fun by playing Hide and Seek with the cards. Hide them round the room and talk about each picture as it is found. Try clapping out the syllables of each word as well. This is not only fun, but helps fine tune your child's listening skills.

Once your child is familiar with the picture vocabulary, pick two different picture cards for the listening game (your child needs to listen to which word you are saying). Start with words

that have a big difference in syllable number (for example, croc-o-dile vs. cat). Then, gradually move towards words that have the same syllable number (for example, car vs. bus).

As your child's listening develops, it is important they are exposed to speech contrasts that are more difficult to hear.

Hierarchy of word pairs:

Phrase vs. word

Four syllable word vs. one syllable word

Three syllable word vs. one syllable word

Two syllable word vs. one syllable word

One syllable word vs. one syllable word

Useful hint

Create decks of pictures cards around themes as this will make it easier for your child to learn and remember this language. You can use:

- family names
- animals
- colours
- food
- toys
- transport
- shapes

Talk about the pictures so your child becomes familiar with the vocabulary. Then pick two pictures and ask your child to give you one of them by saying "give me the...". Then increase the number of cards to choose from.

Rewards

Keep games interesting and fun for older children too by using rewards. You can try things like colouring in part of a picture, posting the pictures, cutting and sticking pictures on a reward chart, and stamping completed picture cards with stampers.

4. Comprehension

Once your child is able to recognise words, they are ready to move on to the next stage of listening – comprehension. At this stage your child will not only be able to identify words that have been said, but will also know the meaning of those words.

You will be given further ideas and information when your child reaches this stage.

Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about early listening development, please contact the Paediatric Auditory Implant Programme on **020 7188 6245**.

Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC)

For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.

t: 020 7188 3416

Language support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS Direct

Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 0845 4647 **w:** www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 2865/VER3

Date published: February 2016

Review date: February 2019

© 2016 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust