

Listening Skills Programme

This programme has been designed by educational psychologist, Tim Francis, in order to enhance children's listening skills. It also seeks to encourage children to hold words and chunks of speech in memory and process them, allowing links to the memory to be established and maintained. This programme assumes that listening is an active process and the games and activities are all geared to the children taking sounds and processing them mentally by changing them into another form, be it physical action as in Simon Says or a mental change of form as in picture listening.

Sometimes you might need to explain to the children that they may not have learned to listen quite as well as they could have done. Try explaining that:

- You have to learn lots of difficult things as you grow up
- Listening is a very difficult thing to learn and this programme is here to help them with one area that they find difficult

At all stages the children should be encouraged to:

1. Make eye contact with whoever is speaking
2. Show non verbal signs of listening, e.g., nodding their head

The following are a variety of games that can be easily implemented with children at school or indeed at home:

1. *I went to the market and I bought...* - Here the children have to repeat all that went before. Begin by example, "I went to the market and I bought a dog". Go around the group once or twice and suggest that the children invent a story to go with the items. Let us say that the following have been put forward: a dog, a car, some sweets, a doll, a dress, a hat, a cat. The story might go like this, "I bought a dog and put it in my car, I had some sweets in my car that were next to my doll, my doll had a hat on, when I got home my cat was waiting." Run the game a number of times and ask if the children found it easier to remember what was said.
2. *My Weekend...* - Divide the children into pairs. They should sit facing each other. Tell them that they will be asked to repeat what their partner has said. Allow one minute for each child to describe their weekend. Then ask for partners to repeat back.
3. *Picture Listening...* - Use the text below called, "The Garden" and tell the children that they must not ask each other questions during this game. Hand out paper and coloured pencils: Blue, white, black, yellow, green, red and brown. Tell the children that you want them to draw as you read. You may have to read the text several times over. Do not answer questions about the text but read the whole text so that the children have to listen to the whole and extract the information they need. Once they have completed their pictures gently ask them

some test questions about the text. Praise lavishly saying how well the children have listened.

The Garden

It is a sunny day. The sky is blue with only three white clouds in it. There are no birds in the sky. In the middle of your picture stands a house. It has a black roof and two small chimneys. There is no smoke coming out of the chimneys, because it is a warm day.

There are three windows upstairs in the house, the middle window has yellow curtains and the other two windows have green curtains. Downstairs there is a black door underneath the window with yellow curtains. On either side of the black door are windows with blue curtains.

The house has a garden. There is a green lawn and three trees on each side of the house. The garden has many red and yellow flowers. There is a path leading from the door to a white gate.

Beyond the gate is a lane and coming up the lane are two children dressed in jeans and tee-shirts. The boy has a big red ball and the girl holds a brown lead which is fastened to a black and white dog. They are going towards the house. They live there.

4. *Simon Says...*- Get the group to stand in a circle and you lead to begin with. Tell the children that they must copy your actions only when you say, "Simon Says". Play the game and after a while offer the opportunity for one of the children to lead. Ignore the traditional rule of, "You're Out" as this is a wind down activity and should be played as fun.
5. *Port and Starboard...*- Arrange the seats one line behind the other into a line. Tell the children that if you say port they have to look to the left. If you say starboard they have to look to the right. If you say seagull they should look up. Demonstrate this by example. Children like to think up their own actions to add to this game, for example, shark - look down and captain - salute.
6. *Sound Detectives...*- Seat children in a circle. Ask them to close their eyes and try and recognise the sounds they are going to hear. Tell them that they must not call out as the game is going on but remember what they thought the sound was and only say when asked at the end. Walk about the room, cutting paper with scissors/screwing up paper/moving a chair/leafing through the pages of a book/scribbling with a pen, etc. Ask the children to recall what they heard in sequence.
7. *Chinese Whispers...* - Start with the children seated in a circle. Pass message from one to another in whisper. The last person to receive message repeats it aloud to the group. Then allow the children to move silently around the room, passing the message around for a

minute or more. Ask the last person to receive the message to repeat it aloud.

Ideas for rewards/incentives to use regularly throughout the sessions in order to motivate children towards reaching their full listening potential:

1. Heaps of praise!! *"Well done, you really did listen well there"*.
2. Stickers/badges
3. Merit certificates obtained from www.senteacher.org
4. Enclosed letter to children
5. At the end of the programme - Super Listener Certificate

It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. These games should be used regularly over a number of months at times when the child is willing to participate. At the end of the sessions, the leader should evaluate the child's performance and assess whether or not these listening enhancement skills are effective for that particular child!