

Advice to Parents on Activities to Develop Listening Skills and Auditory Memory (Working Memory)

Games to develop listening skills

1. What do you hear?

Child is asked to listen for a minute to identify the sounds that s/he hears. A variation of this would be to identify near and distant sounds.

2. Where is it?

With eyes shut or blindfolded, child is asked to indicate where a selected sound is coming from. You could make the sound by playing a drum, or triangle etc or by using a ticking clock. Challenge your child to do this while a background sound, eg radio is playing.

3. Simon Says

The child follows an instruction only when it is prefaced by, 'Simon says.....' A challenging variation is to introduce each action by saying, 'do this!' or 'do that!' Child must only respond if you have said, 'do this!' i.e. not if you have said, 'do that!'

4. Listening to stories

Our culture is increasingly a visual one and bedtime stories etc have perhaps become more picture-dependent than they previously were. Try telling a story, or reading without encouraging the child to view the pictures during the story. You might even try and catch your child out by changing names or details, to check their listening attention. Can s/he recall the names of characters in the story?

Games to develop working memory

5. Accumulative songs and games

Songs like 'Old MacDonald,' and 'There was an old woman who swallowed a fly,' foster good memory skills. They may be accompanied by actions if this helps your child remember the sequence better. Play, 'I went to the toy shop and bought...' adding a different item each time and remembering each accumulation.

6. Joke telling

Teach your child to tell and remember simple jokes correctly. Knock, knock jokes are good because s/he will have to listen for the response of others.

7. String of numbers/letters

Give a string of digits or mixed letters and digits for child to repeat. Gradually increase the length of the sequence. To foster a higher order processing skill, challenge your child to repeat a short sequence back to you in reverse order. An alternative is to say a string of letters/numbers, then repeat it with one missing. Can your child identify the lost item? If you substitute one of the numbers for a new one, can s/he tell you what change you have made?

8. Silly nursery rhymes

If your child knows nursery rhymes well, you can have fun substituting a word in the rhyme for another one. Child to identify changed word.

9 Listen and draw

Begin with one instruction, eg 'Draw a house.' Increase number of instructions: 'Draw a house with 3 windows; draw a house with 3 windows and put 2 trees in the picture; draw a house with 3 windows and put 2 trees in the garden and 4 birds in the sky.'

10 Jumbled sentence

Jumble the words in a sentence. Can s/he make sense of it?