

Speech and Language Therapy

Attention and Listening

How attention and listening usually develop

Age	What children can usually do
0–1 year	Attention is very short. Babies are easily distracted.
1–2 years	Children can focus on what they want to do, but they don't like being stopped or interrupted.
2–3 years	Children can focus on one thing at a time. They find it hard to listen to another instruction while they are busy.
3–4 years	Children can move their attention from one thing to another.
4–5 years	Children can listen to an instruction while doing something else.

It is normal for young children to get distracted. But it's still important to help them build strong attention and listening skills. These skills are the building blocks for all learning.

When a child can focus, they can pick out the important information around them and ignore background noise. Good attention and listening also help children understand language.

Signs your child may be finding attention and listening difficult

You may notice that your child:

- Gets distracted very easily by noises, toys or movement
- Struggles to follow instructions
- Finds it hard to stay focused on a task
- Has difficulty joining in with group activities

Strategies and Activities

These ideas can help your child build strong attention and listening skills.

Strategies

- **Say your child's name first** so they know you are talking to them.
- **Follow your child's lead.** Play beside them and talk about what they are doing.
- **Turn off background noise** like the TV, radio or washing machine when you want your child to listen or look at a book.
- **Keep the room simple.** Start with only one or two toys out. Add more toys slowly as your child gets better at focusing.
- **Get down to their level** so they can see your face when you talk or play.
- **Use fun and lively facial expressions** to keep their attention on you.
- **Use clear language** like “look at me” or “listen to Daddy” to help them focus.
- **Praise good listening** by saying things like “great listening!”

Activities

- **Listening to sounds:** Point out everyday sounds like the phone, animals or the doorbell.
- **Guess the instrument:** Play a musical instrument while your child closes their eyes. Ask them to guess which one you played.
- **Animal sounds:** Put toy animals in front of your child. Make a sound and ask them to pick the right animal.
- **Ready, Steady, Go!** Use a car or ball. Say “Ready... Steady...” then pause. When your child is looking at you, say “Go!” and let it roll. You can also use this game for:
 - Jigsaws – wait for “go” before putting a piece in
 - Building towers – wait for “go” before adding a brick
 - Books – wait for “go” before turning the page
- **Turn-taking games:** Take turns building a tower, rolling a ball or doing a puzzle. This helps your child wait and stay focused.
- **Singing rhymes:** Sing simple songs and leave a pause for your child to fill in a word, sound or action.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Children's Therapies
Broad Street Plaza
Halifax
Telephone 01422 261340

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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