

Attention & Listening

Being able to attend & listen are essential skills that help us with:

- Understanding language
- Following instructions
- Learning to communicate
- Developing speech sounds
- All areas of learning

General Strategies For Supporting Attention & Listening

- Make sure you have your child's attention before you give them an instruction. For example, say their name first or gently touch them on the arm.
- Get down to your child's level so they can see your face.
- Reinforce what you are saying with pointing, gesture and practical demonstrations. For example, if you want them to button up their coat, mime doing up buttons.
- When working or playing together try to remove or reduce distractions. For example, turn off the TV and radio, and only have one toy or activity out at a time.
- Encourage your child to finish what they are doing before moving onto another activity.
- Keep things simple. For example, it is better if your child completes a 3 piece puzzle than starts a 12 piece puzzle and leaves halfway through.
- Give your child lots of praise whenever they show good looking and listening.

Developing Your Child's Attention

Start with what your child can do already. For example, if they can sit and listen for 20 seconds start with activities that are just 20 seconds long and gradually build up the length of time they can attend.

Step 1: Motivating Activities

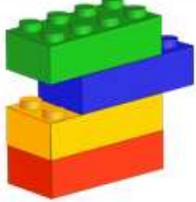
Work towards being able to spend 5 minutes doing an activity that your child really enjoys. Play together and, where possible, take turns in the activity. For example, take turns building and knocking down a tower or rolling/kicking a ball back and forth. Remember to go at your child's pace. When they start to lose interest end the activity.

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Step 2: Now and Next

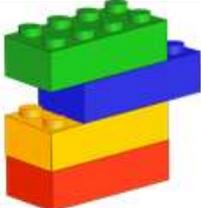
Introduce a second activity. Make sure the activities are both still motivating for your child. Spend 5 minutes doing the first activity and then move onto the second activity. You may need to keep the second activity very brief to begin with.

- Changing the activity (rather than increasing the time spent doing one activity) helps your child to learn about following instructions/doing what is asked of them.
- A now/next board may help your child understand what they are being asked to do. At the start of play, show your child what you are going to be doing. When it is time to move onto the next activity, remove the 'now' picture and point to the 'next' picture.
- Your child may find it hard to transition from one activity to the next. This is why it is important to make sure that both activities are very motivating, and to be consistent when practicing.

Now	Next
 <p data-bbox="587 1205 687 1238">Building</p>	 <p data-bbox="943 1205 986 1238">Ball</p>

Step 3: Increase time

Once your child can tolerate doing the two activities for 5 minutes each, gradually increase the time spent on each activity. You can then begin increasing the number of activities, introducing these as you did in step 2. Over time you can begin to introduce slightly less motivating activities.

Now	Next	Then
 <p data-bbox="410 1798 515 1834">Building</p>	 <p data-bbox="778 1798 826 1834">Ball</p>	 <p data-bbox="1082 1798 1198 1834">Balloons</p>

Remember: Only change one thing at a time and go at your child's pace. You may need to spend a considerable amount of time at step 1 before you even consider moving onto step 2.