

## Listening to Speech Sounds - Activity ideas

### Pre-intervention pack

Speech involves selecting the appropriate speech sounds, organising them into the correct sequence and then articulating them with accurate lip and tongue movements.

Some children have difficulty with the development of speech, this can make them difficult to understand.

### What you can do to help

- Giving lots of praise when your child attempts a word, even if it is unclear.
- Saying new words over and over. The more your child hears a new word, the quicker he / she will learn it and try to say it.
- Turn off the TV, music, etc... because young children can only concentrate on one thing at a time. Your child won't be able to hear your speech clearly if there is background noise.
- If your child still has a dummy / bottle, try to remove *as soon as possible*. This could be affecting your child's speech and language development.
- Don't correct your child's speech or tell him / her that they're wrong. Just repeat the word for him / her. For example, if your child says, 'dock', say, 'Yes, it's a sock' emphasising the 's' sound.
- If you don't know what your child has tried to say, try imitating what he / she has said. At least he / she will know you are listening and trying to understand what he / she is saying. Alternatively, try to guess what he / she is saying. Even if you are wrong, your child will know you are listening.
- If you really cannot understand what your child is saying and he / she is becoming frustrated, explain that you can't understand and ask your child to try to show you what he / she means in another way. When all else fails, try again later and let your child know that you appreciate his / her efforts to talk.
- Be face-to-face and at your child's level, for example, sit or lie on the floor next to your child. If he / she can see your face and mouth, it will be easier for him / her to see how your mouth makes the sounds that make up the words you are saying. Also always speak slowly and clearly.
- If your child has difficulty producing certain sounds in words, for example, he / she says 'bish' for 'fish', concentrate on the 'f' for a week or two by pointing out things in and outside of the home that begin with 'f' and by emphasising the sound in the word, for example, 'Look, there's a fish. There's a fence'. Don't put any pressure on him/her to say these words.

- Make a speech sounds scrapbook. Cut pictures out of a magazine that begin with different sounds and stick them in a scrapbook, i.e. a double page for 's' words, a double page for 'c/k' words, etc. Name the pictures for your child emphasising the initial sound, for example, 'sock'. If your child attempts to say the words, praise his / her efforts. If he / she mispronounces a word, repeat it after them clearly, but don't ask them to try again at this stage. Encourage your child to think about where the picture needs to go in the book, i.e. what sound it starts with. You will have to give lots of help with this to start with.
- Syllable clapping is useful to encourage young child to begin to listen to and think about how speech is made up. Introduce it with the above activity, while you are looking at pictures and sticking them in your scrapbook together. For example, 'How many claps does apple have? A-pple. 2 claps!' 'How many claps does dinosaur have? Di-no-saur. 3 claps!' Clap the words out for your child, slowly, to listen to and encourage them to join in.

### **Improving your child's general listening skills**

Good listening skills are a pre-requisite for language learning and speech development.

### **The following should be considered before working on your child's listening skills or speech:**

- Reduce and distractions, for example, switch off TV, radio, background noise
- Find a quiet room where disturbances are unlikely to occur.
- Remove any toys other than the ones being used.
- Keep activities short and simple to begin with and gradually build them up
- Materials need to be interesting for your child

### **The following activity ideas will help your child's 'active' listening skills:**

- Ready, steady go! games are useful. Your child must listen for the word 'Go!' before performing an action, for example, racing cars, throwing balls, throwing beanbags at a target, posting objects.
- Listening for different musical instruments. Your child must close their eyes and you play the instrument, then they must guess which one it was. You can make this more difficult by hiding the instruments around the room.
- Have pictures of familiar animals, make the animal noise and get your child to identify it.
- Games of I-Spy are helpful to start playing as soon as your child is ready, to encourage them to start thinking about listening to sounds.
- Make a story with your child's name in it. Get your child to put their hand up when they hear their name.

- Sing nursery rhymes or favourite songs and leave a pause for your child to supply the missing word.
- Tell well-known stories, pausing for your child to join in at key moments. Stories with repetition lines are good for this activity, for example, The Gingerbread Man, The Three Little Pigs, etc.
- Hide a loud ticking clock or musical toy and help your child to find it. Talk to them about the noise becoming louder or quieter as you both look for the item.
- Playing musical bumps or musical statues

### **Listening to speech**

The speech sound pictures attached at the back of this programme are used to give the child a visual representation of that sound. They are particularly useful in pre-reading children.

Introduce the pictures six at a time by frequently repeating the sounds and getting your child to point to the picture. This task could be reversed by the child making the sounds for you to guess.

### **Increasing awareness of sounds**

**Stepping stones:** Sound pictures are placed on the floor across an imaginary river to make stepping stones. The child crosses the river by using the stones, naming each one as it is stepped on.

**Lotto:** Draw out two lotto boards, nine squares on each, stick sound pictures on and then draw another set of pictures to cover the boards.

**Snap:** Use sound pictures, divide the cards according to the number of players and take it in turns to place cards turned up on the table. Say 'snap' when two cards are the same. Winner is the one with cards remaining.

**Dice games:** Stick sound pictures on to bricks or cubes and throw as dice. Your child may guess which picture will be on top when the dice falls.

**Skittles:** Pictures may be attached to skittles. Your child must say which pictures he / she is aiming for before knocking them down.

**Pass the Parcel:** Pictures are wrapped in several layers of paper. The parcel is passed from player to player until the music stops. The person holding the parcel when the music stops removes a layer of paper and keeps the picture he / she finds, and names it.

**Hunt the Picture:** Pictures of items containing the target sounds are hidden around the room. The child names each picture as it is found.

