

Activities to Develop Attention and Listening Skills in Older Children

- **LOTTO, SNAP & MEMORY PAIR GAMES** - or any other motivational type games. Gradually increase the amount of time spent on each game.



- **GUESSING GAMES** - play games such as "20 questions", "guess who" type games. Put objects or pictures in a bag, take turns to choose one and then the other children ask questions to guess what the object is i.e. is it an animal? does it live on a farm? You could also play "I spy" games.



- **DRAWING GAMES** - The child has to listen to instructions about what to draw i.e. draw a red circle or draw a house with a green door. Make the instructions harder and longer as the child's skills develop.

- **NAME GAMES** - e.g. who stole the cookie from the cookie jar.... "Jack stole" Any other story or song which involves names or listening for actions or buzz words.
- **STORY BOOKS** - Listen to a short story and see if the child can respond to simple questions about what happened. Can they predict what will happen or how the story will end? Can they retell the story in their own words?

Memory Games

- **KIM'S GAME** - Place four or more items on the floor. The child closes their eyes then once they open them they have to try to guess which items you have removed.
- **I WENT SHOPPING AND I BOUGHT.....** - Play this in a small group or with individual children and increase the number of items the child has to remember.
- **SHOPPING LIST GAME** - Make a list of items that you want the child to find, from the classroom. Gradually increase the amount of items that the child has to remember.



Attention and Listening activities

Some of the following ideas are more appropriate for *listening* and for older children, and some are more appropriate for younger children.

Classroom

Copy the rhythm - Play this game as a 'brain gym', in PE, circle time, music etc. Beat out a rhythm with your hands or on an instrument. Children copy the rhythm one at a time or in a small group. Use this to gain attention also – children have to stop what they are doing and copy the rhythm.



Story Time

Read a well-known story or a current topic story that the children know well. Make some deliberate mistakes as you tell it (ask the children to listen carefully and spot the mistakes)

Ask each child to be a different character, and as you read the story they must stand up/ put their hand up/ clap etc. if they hear their 'name'.

Read a familiar story or rhyme. Can children fill in the missing word if you leave a gap?

Actions also keep children engaged. Introduce actions for specific parts of a story, so they are listening for when to do a particular action (perhaps choose 4). Action songs and rhymes also keep children interested.

After listening to it once re-tell stories as a group, either part-by-part or sentence-by-sentence, (give warning that you are going to do this before you read the story to encourage their listening).



Playtime/ Games Lessons

Sound actions - Link an action to a specific instrument e.g. Shaker = jump, drum = march, triangle = sleep etc.

Listening to Silence - A good 'warming down' exercise. Lie on the floor and listen to all the sounds you can hear e.g. Cars, people in the hallway, breathing, coughing, clock ticking. Ask them afterwards what they heard.

Jack-in-the-box - All crouch down and spring up when you hear a drum bang/ clap etc.

'Music and movement'- activities like moving in a particular way to a particular type of music involve listening and responding

Musical Bumps/ Statues - Play music and children must sit down/ stand still when the music Stops

Traffic lights - Let the children run freely. Shout 'red' for children to stop running, 'amber' for them to sit down and 'green' to go again



Music

Sound sorting – You will need some musical instruments/ noisemakers for this activity (2x of each type). Use one instrument/ shaker behind a screen. Can children come and choose the same one?

Play like me - Can children play an instrument in the same way you did – loudly, quietly, getting louder, in a rhythm etc.

Action songs - Sing action songs like these, for younger children:

'Wheels on the Bus', 'Heads and Shoulders', 'Wind the bobbin up', 'Here we go round the mulberry bush', 'Incey Wincey spider', 'Two little dicky birds' etc.

Circle Time

Follow the clap -

children must listen, watch and pay attention while a clap goes around the circle, so they know when it is their turn. Change the direction of the clap by blowing a whistle. You can also do this with passing actions around the circle.

Find the sound -



Blindfold a child in the middle of the circle and get them to point to where a noise is coming from. The children in the circle pass round a toy that is difficult to keep quiet (a shaker etc). An alternative is to point to a child and they must clap. The blindfolded child must point to where the clap came from.

Who is talking? -

Blindfold a child in the middle again. Everyone in the circle swaps places and the child points to someone. They say something ('hello'/ a topic word e.g. the name of a mini-beast etc) and the child in the middle has to guess who spoke.

Simon says -

Play the action game 'Simon says... touch your head/ turn around/ lift your leg up'. To make it more difficult, children must do the action if you say 'Simon says...' in front of the instruction, but not if you miss that bit off. I.e. only do the action if Simon says to do it!

Stand up -

Play 'stand up if you are wearing ... blue/ a skirt/ red socks/ glasses'.



Copy the action -

the 'leader' in the circle starts doing a repetitive action e.g. Patting their knees. Everyone must copy and watch until the action changes. Wait until everyone is doing the same thing before the leader changes the action. Children can take it in turns to be the leader.

Fruit Salad -

Choose 3 fruits and go around the circle naming children e.g. apple, pear or banana. When the leader says a fruit, everyone who is that fruit must swap places. 'Fruit salad' means everyone swaps at once. You can play the same with animals instead - 'animal crackers', with clothes 'washing day' and any other relevant topic.

Shopping game/ 'I went to market' -

Play games where you have to remember a list of items. For example:



Adult: I went to market and I bought an apple.

Child: I went to market and I bought an apple and a cake.

Also use 'I packed my suitcase. I went to Egypt' etc. depending on the topic.

What is it? -

Describe a hidden object or picture of an object. Can children listen to the clues and guess what you have seen?

Sound Lotto -

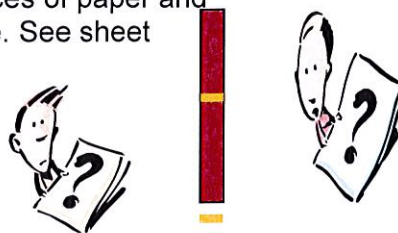
Children listen to a tape and identify sounds they hear by pointing to the appropriate picture.

Lotto games/ matching -

These are a good way of encouraging your child to listen and attend. When you choose a card, don't let the children see it, just name it or describe it and see if they can find the matching picture.

Small groups/ paired work

Barrier Games – collect together two identical sets of objects, one for you and one for the child. Make sure you cannot see each other's objects (by using a barrier or sitting on opposite sides of the room). Give each other instructions about where to put the objects, e.g. put the spoon in/on/under the cup/plate/box. At the end of the game see if the objects are in the same position. You can also do this more easily in a group if you can all have the same picture to colour in instead of objects to move around, or blank pieces of paper and same coloured pens to use. See sheet **Barrier Games**. each a set of the **Expression D4 –**



Re-telling stories - Tell your child a story and see if they can tell it back to you with/ without looking at the pictures. Also play 'Spot the mistake' and other games from the 'Story time' section.

Listening story - Ask the children to draw a 'Listening story' so that they listen to your instructions to complete a drawing e.g. *draw a big circle in the middle of your page...colour it pink*. If several children have done it, compare pictures!

Who is that? - Think of a person/character you and the children all know and describe him or her, with one piece of information at a time. Let the children guess who.

E.g. *I'm thinking of an animal.
He has very big, floppy ears
He is grey with a bit of pink
He can use his ears to fly.... (Dumbo)*

Which animal is that? - Collect two identical sets of farm animal toys. Hide one of the animals under a box and imitate the noise it makes. Encourage your child to listen and find the animal that makes the same noise then check if it matches the animal under the box.

I spy - Play 'I Spy' using **descriptions** of objects instead of first sounds in words e.g. *"I spy with my little eye, something that we sit on"*.



Silly Sentences – start a sentence e.g. *"I saw a cow sitting"* and ask the children to take it in turns to finish the sentence e.g. *"in the middle of our kitchen"*, *"She was eating...a piece of apple pie."*