

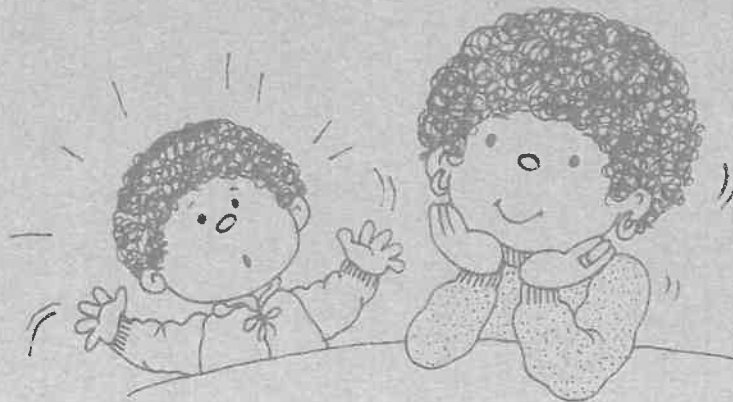
How To Help Your Child Listen

Listening is half of communication. Help your child learn to be a better listener and he or she will become a more effective communicator. First, make sure your child is hearing normally. If you have any concerns about your child's ability to hear, seek professional help from an audiologist for a complete hearing evaluation.

Once your child hears adequately, the child then has to understand what he or she hears in order to respond appropriately. When children understand what they hear, they have auditory comprehension. When a child understands words and sentences, he or she has developed speech and language skills. Listening skills help a child develop friendships by participating in the normal sharing of conversational give-and-take. Good listening skills provide a child with a greater chance at success at school since students spend more time listening than doing any other activity.

When you respond to a child's speech and language efforts in a positive manner, the child is encouraged to continue to keep trying. Likewise, the child learns how to become a good listener when you model desirable behavior. Let your child know you are listening in a sincere way. You can do this by giving your full attention when the child is talking to you, looking at the child, waiting patiently for the child to finish, and then responding in a meaningful way to what the child said. You can also show good listening behavior when you sit down in a quiet room, turn off nearby radios or televisions, and devote all your attention to the conversation with your child.

Challenge your child's listening skills by interjecting a little humor. For example, ask the child how many wings a bird has, and then ask how many wings a frog has. When you ask your child questions, vary the type of question you ask to keep the child listening closely. Sometimes a question seeking a one-word reply is necessary (for example, "Did you feed the dog?"). Other questions may require more listening and thinking (for example, "What did you like about dinner tonight?" "Why do we go to the grocery store?" "What would happen if your big brother tried to wear your shoes?").



You can encourage your child's good listening skills when you . . .

reduce and eliminate background noise and distractions when talking to the child

get the child's attention before speaking

talk to the child at eye level

speak slowly and clearly to the child, and repeat if necessary

reduce visual and auditory distractions in the room to help with attention and focus

use a consistent routine

respond to what the child says so he or she knows you are listening

use words helpful to the child as he or she remembers a sequence (for example, "first," "next," "then," "finally")

use other cues, such as facial expressions, pointing to objects, or gestures, as needed to enhance communication

repeat your ideas often and in different ways (for example, "Please put on your shoes before you go out to play." "Shoes go on first. Then go play." "What do you do first?" "If you have your shoes on, then you may go play.")

give your child time to think after a question

exaggerate important words with your voice (for example, "Time for **lunch**." "Wear the **purple** shirt.")

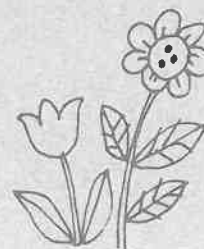
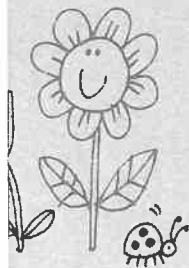
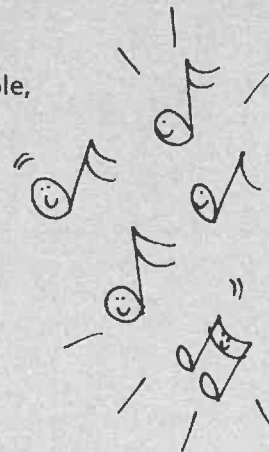
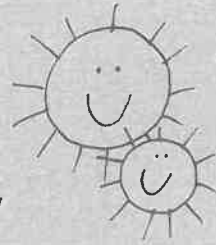
rephrase your directions or questions

provide a generous supply of listening experiences (for example, human voices, singing, music, animal sounds, sounds found in a park, a zoo, a city street, a backyard) and have your child tell you everything he or she hears

give praise when the child listens well

have an occasional reward waiting for the child when he or she listens well

spend time every day conversing with your child in a relaxed, unhurried setting



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