

 **ATTENTION AND LISTENING**

Children need to be able to attend and concentrate so that they can learn new skills, including how to communicate and understand. A child develops their attention and listening skills by listening to every day sounds and speech around them before they can learn to speak for themselves. Children develop attention and listening skills through frequent opportunities to interact and play with others.

**Top tips to develop attention and listening**

* Gain eye contact and get down to the child’s level - face to face.
* Say the child’s name to gain their attention and if needed give a gentle physical prompt touch on the shoulder or arm.
* Slow your rate of speech and use pauses. Ensuring you allow time for children to process your request or instructions.
* Follow the child’s lead throughout the play. Play with what interests them, keeping activities short and stopping when the child loses interest
* Keep your play exciting by using your tone of voice and facial expression.
* Using pauses during play can build in an element of anticipation. For example pausing

before ‘go’ in ‘ready, steady, go’ games, and waiting for the child to indicate that they want the next step to happen.

* Minimize noise and visual distractions.
* Use gestures and objects to cue in the child’s attention and help their understanding.
* Use simple phrases and sentences, breaking down instructions into smaller key word phrases. Checking the chid has understood and heard what you have said.
* Use activity rules – good looking, good listening, good waiting. These can be used to model what you want the child to do. Remind them often and praise when they follow.
* Set manageable goals and ensure previous tasks are finished before giving a new one. For children who struggle to maintain their attention use start / finish boxes.

**Activities to try**

**Follow the leader**

Sit opposite the child and carry out different actions (e.g. clapping, waving your hands, patting your head) and your child has to copy them. When they are familiar with this game, give them turns at carrying out the action for you to follow, this can develop into simple games such as Peek-a-boo.

## Feely boxes

Take something of interest and put it in a box. Open the box slowly, let them put their hand in and feel it! You could use a favourite toy, a glove puppet, a banana, or a musical instrument. Explore it, play with it, if it’s a snack eat it.

**Ready, Steady, Go**

Play games that involve ‘ready, steady, go’ (e.g. bubbles, running, obstacle courses, rolling a car down a ramp, blowing up balloons and letting go etc.). Pause before ‘go’ and see if your child can wait and then respond with an action or vocalization for you to say ‘go’.

**Nursery rhymes and songs**

Use favorite nursery rhymes to gain and maintain attention, use props if needed. Sing one line and see if the child can end the phrase/song i.e ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, little……………’ pause and wait for a response.