

Strategies to Help Children with Hearing Loss to Listen and Learn

Hearing levels and speech-language development (in preschool age children) or academic progress (in school age children) should be monitored regularly. Regular contact between parents, caregivers and teachers helps to promote understanding of the child's successes and difficulties, and to implement strategies for success.

Create a Good Listening Environment

- At home, move close to the child and away from noise sources before speaking (e.g., dishwasher, television, stereo, door, window, heater). If there is a better hearing ear, it should be closer to the person speaking.
- At school, the child should sit close to where the teacher instructs and away from noise sources when possible (e.g., door, window, heater, trash, pencil sharpener). If there is a better hearing ear, it should be closer to the teacher.
- Make sure the child has a clear and unobstructed view of the speaker. At school, try desk arrangements such as short rows or horseshoes.
- Use a DM (digital modulation) system, also known as FM, to improve the child's ability to hear and understand the speaker's voice.

Try these suggestions to improve room acoustics:

- Use area carpets, curtains and acoustic ceiling tiles.
- Put bulletin boards and artwork on the walls.
- Close doors and windows.
- Cover desk or chair feet with soft material (e.g., felt pads, tennis balls, socks).
- Make sure heating and air conditioning systems are in proper working order.
- Turn off noises before talking (e.g., television, radio, projector).



Monitor Attention and Understanding



- Get the child's attention before talking, giving instructions, or starting new activities. Try calling his/her name, touching his/her shoulder, flicking the lights or using a specified word or hand signal.
- Identify the person who is talking and repeat or rephrase what they say.
- If the child does not understand something, change the wording and simplify the language instead of repeating the same question or statement.
- Ask the child questions related to the subject under discussion.
- "Chunk" instructions into short pieces and include only necessary information.
- At school:
 - give the child short breaks during lessons;
 - face the students when giving spoken instructions; and
 - pass around the DM system microphone during classroom discussions or presentations.

Watch for Signs of Frustration

- The child may not be aware that you are talking to them and may not respond consistently.
- Encourage the child to let you or their teacher know when they do not hear or understand something, or if noise bothers them.
- Give the child enough time to process spoken information before they respond.
- Involve the child in group activities they enjoy (e.g., swimming, crafts, gymnastics, music).
- It is important to be patient and encouraging.



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Use Visual Cues

- Face the child, speak clearly, use a slow rate of speech, and stand still when talking.
- Keep objects away from your face when talking (e.g., gum, mustache, pen, hands, books).
- Encourage the child to watch the speaker's face.
- Room lighting should shine on the speaker's face. It causes a glare when it is behind them.
- At school:
 - Display charts, lists, or diagrams of classroom routines.
 - Write new vocabulary on the blackboard.
 - Write instructions and assignments on the board and have the children copy them down.
 - Use experiments and demonstrations to reinforce learning.
 - Keep a light on near the teacher's face during movies so the child can lip read.



Provide Opportunities for Pre-School Children to Learn Language

- Use hands-on activities (e.g., play house, bake, build Lego) to reinforce learning.
- Talk about things as they happen. Talk about what the child is hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and doing.
- Use daily activities (e.g., shopping, making supper, going for a walk) to teach vocabulary. Children learn words from hearing them thousands of times in many different ways.
- Read to the child as often and as much as possible.
- For more information on how to encourage pre-school children to learn language, please view the ACSLPA information sheet [Preschool Speech Language Development - Birth to 5 Years](#).

Provide as Much Individual Attention in Classroom Settings as Possible



- One-on-one teaching and extra language assistance may help fill in gaps in learning.
- The child may need help understanding instructions and questions during exams so they are being tested on their knowledge and not their language skills. He/she may also need to move to a quieter room.
- Give lesson outlines to parents/resource personnel so they can help the child become familiar with new vocabulary and concepts before the lesson.
- Agree on an appropriate peer who can help the child if he/she misses important material or instructions or does not understand assignments.

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Be Familiar with the Child's Hearing Aids and DM System

- Hearing aids and DM systems, also known as FM, help the child to hear better but do not "fix" the hearing loss; the child may still have difficulty hearing or understanding speech.
- Request in-services by parents or educational audiologists.
- Learn how to do a listening check, change or charge batteries, turn the device on/off, and ensure volume controls are set correctly.
- For more information refer to the ACSLPA information sheet on [Digital Modulation \(DM\) Systems](#).



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