

Babies and Young Listeners

Listening is a continuum:

Detection - knowing there is sound present

Discrimination - knowing that there are different types of sound

Identification - knowing what the sound represents (eg doorbell)

Comprehension - knowing that words/sounds have meaning and acting on that.

Sound Awareness and Detection

Sound awareness and the detection of sound is the first step in learning to listen. This skill is the foundation of the learning to listen process.

At this stage of listening we would expect a new implant user to attend to sound in an intermittent way.

A young child may search for sound by eye glancing or head turning, stopping his or her activity, becoming quiet, stilling, startling and/or vocalising.

When the child has plenty of experiences in listening to sounds he/she might start to routinely look for sounds and locate them, discriminate one sound from another (particularly if the sound is interesting!).

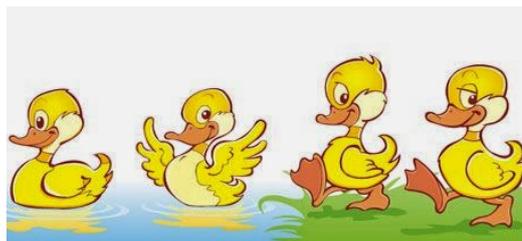
As the child continues to develop he/she should be able to respond to sounds in a more co-ordinated way for example turning to look at an interesting toy when hearing a sound.

Ideas for working on detection of sound

Present lots of opportunities for your child to develop the ability to detect the presence or absence of sounds/language in a meaningful and fun way along with a 'what's that noise?' Or 'where's that coming from?'

Make your own noise

Use your own voice to make different noises and copy sounds from your environment e.g. 'woof woof' when you are looking at a picture/book with a dog in, quack quack for ducks in the park and so on.



Bath time may be a good time to do this (If you have a waterproof processor!) as you can explore the noises that water and splashing makes, use bubble bath to encourage your child to splash about and then use words like ‘splish, splash, splosh’ or use bath toys to which you can go ‘wheeeeeeee/wooooooosssshhhh/splaaaaaassssssshhhhhh.



Blow raspberries, hum, whistle, sing a song or nursery rhyme (see below). Laugh, talk, clap hands, stamp feet, click fingers, blow bubbles and then ‘pop pop pop’ one by one.

Use noise makers

Also use noise makers and toys as above with your child and encourage them to explore the noises/sounds that they make. Use one item first then the second, then the two together to support the understanding that they make different noises.

Use noise makers in a different way to explore sounds:

- Explore different volumes, beat patterns and pitches of instruments
- Play instruments in a different way (e.g. a tambourine can be shaken, scratched, tapped or hit with a hard or soft blow) or using a different beater (e.g. an upturned saucepan and wooden spoon can be used very successfully for loud and soft sounds , fast and slow sounds, continuous and abrupt sounds).



Sing nursery rhymes and songs:

Sing nursery rhymes that are repetitive and have a good rhythm and lots of bounce to them, those with different sound/animal etc in each verse are great to establish the idea of different sounds (e.g. The wheels on the bus, Old MacDonald had a Farm and so on).

Remember, you don’t have to be the best singer or dancer in the world!
Your child will just enjoy having fun with you.

- Use lots of expression and different movements that distinguish one nursery rhyme/song from another
- Encourage your child to move with the rhythm and sing along also.
- If you have puppets or toys that go with the rhyme this can help to mark the change of sounds e.g. different animals for each verse of Old MacDonald or if not, draw or paint the animals on your fingertips or onto paper on the end of lollipop sticks!
- Sing songs with lots of bounce to them – then, when you stop singing stop moving so the silence is more noticeable.



- Make pauses dramatic - this helps prediction also.

Examples of nursery rhymes and songs

Row, row, row the boat

The wheels on the bus

See-saw Marjorie Daw

I'm a little teapot

Head, shoulders, knees and
toes

Hickory Dickory Dock

Ring-a -ring o' roses



Things to look for at this stage

Other signs that your child is beginning to discriminate between sounds might include:

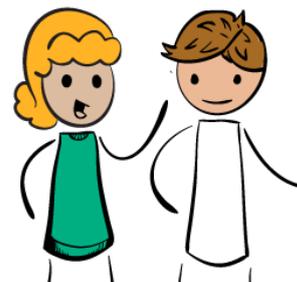
For young children under 2: different responses to different sounds

For children over 2: Attention to differences between and among sounds

For all children: experimenting with different sounds – enjoying exploring and making different noises with instruments, toys and voice.

Discrimination and Identification

- At this stage children are beginning to notice and connect different sounds with objects/people/events in the environment. Children learn to attend to differences between and among sounds, and to respond to a variety of auditory input. Sound could be speech, speech-like, or environmental.
- Children will learn to perceive similarities and differences between two or more speech stimuli e.g. mum's voice, dad's voice.



- When a child has plenty of experiences in listening to sounds he/she might start to routinely look for sounds and locate them, and begin to discriminate one sound from another.
- Go for a sound walk and point out what might be making a noise. eg. the traffic, birdsong, people shouting, wind through the trees etc. It is unlikely your child will respond to begin with but as time goes on, they will begin to discern that there are differences.
- The auditory discrimination level does not require that the child label the sound heard. The listener may only need to indicate that two presented sounds were either the same or different.
- Use as many opportunities as possible to introduce new sounds to your child to help them build up a 'sound bank'.



Identification

They may be able to identify the source of a sound without necessarily being able to name that source or the sound.

Children are continuing to attach meaning to sounds by associating what they hear with the source of the noise.

They begin to identify features of speech such as angry and sad tones and male, female and children's voices.

Children learn to demonstrate what they have heard by attempting to repeat what they have heard. Don't worry about how accurate their attempts are at this stage, just showing pleasure will encourage them to continue their efforts.