

Infant/Primary Age

The ability to know that there are different types of sound (discrimination skills)

- At this stage your child learns to attend to differences between and among sounds, and to respond to different sounds. Sound could be speech, speech like, or environmental.
- Your child will learn to perceive similarities and differences between two or more speech stimuli e.g. mum's voice, dad's voice.



- When he/she has plenty of experience in listening to sounds he/she might start to routinely look for sounds and locate them, discriminating one from another.
- Once the child has developed responses to a range of speech sounds, the development of discrimination is encouraged. This can be done in everyday, age - appropriate activities.
- The child learns to discriminate between: loud / quiet sounds, high / low sounds, fast / slow sounds, a continuous / abrupt sound, angry/ cheerful voice, a man/ woman / child's voice etc.



Ideas for working on discrimination of sound

Present lots of opportunities for the child to develop the ability to discriminate between different types of sound in a meaningful and fun way.

Noise makers

Play with the child and let the child experiment with loud and soft noises, fast and slow noises, continuous and abrupt noises. Give the child ideas but always copy ideas if he/she tries something new.

- A drum can be used very successfully for loud and soft sounds, fast and slow sounds and continuous and abrupt sounds. When the child is ready use the pictures in this folder and encourage the child to put a counter on, or point to, the large drum for a loud noise and the small drum for a soft noise.



- A tambourine can also be used for a variety of discrimination activities- loud and soft, fast and slow, continuous and abrupt.
- Bottle music - collect empty bottles of different sizes. Encourage your child to tap them and arrange the bottles in a row from high to low tones. The bottles can be filled with water to different levels to vary the sounds produced.



- A mouth organ (good for blowing too) - good for discrimination activities between a continuous noise and abrupt noises. (Have one each to join in the fun and to ensure the mouth organ is only blown by one person).

Nursery rhymes and songs:

Sing Nursery rhymes that have a good rhythm and lots of bounce to them.

- Use lots of expression and different movements that distinguish one nursery rhyme/ song from another.
- Encourage the child to move with the rhythm and 'sing along' also.
- Use pictures or props for the child to distinguish which nursery rhyme or song is being sung.



- 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.



Discrimination type games:

- Placing counters, or colour an appropriate picture e.g. a counter on the long snake for a long continuous 'ssssssssssssss' noise or a counter on the short snake for a short 'sss' noise. Or one versus two syllable sounds e.g. baa V baa baa (see picture stimuli supplied in this folder).
- Finding the appropriate hidden animal e.g. dog 'woof, woof' and a cat 'meow'. This can be extended to three animals when the child is successful with one and two.
- Throwing a ball or hoop at toy animals e.g. a lamb-'baa' and a cow 'moo'.
- Racing vehicles along a track, making different noises for each vehicle e.g. a car 'brrrm brrrm' and a fire engine 'ni ow, ni ow'.
- Take a pencil or a crayon 'for a walk' on a piece of paper - varying the pattern in response to the sounds e.g. continuous or repeated to reinforce visually what the child is hearing.
- Use everyday activities or toys to feed in natural discrimination in sounds/ words: e.g. Going up the stairs- 'up up up' (Short words) Coming down the stairs 'Downnnn' (one long, continuous word).
- Response cards may be presented that represent the abstract concept same/different. e.g. one card may have two pictures or stickers that are the same and one card may have two different pictures or stickers. Present two names or words the child is familiar with, varying in length and syllables with. e.g.

Mum V Simon

Use pictures of objects the child knows e.g.

Car V Butterfly.

As the child becomes more sophisticated at listening, new names and words can be added. Initially the pattern of names should be dissimilar to ensure that differences are detected. These patterns can be made more similar as the child's level of responses improves. Same/different judgements can also be made using sentences for children whose language ability can support it e.g.

Get your lunchbox What's the weather like today?

- Pictures or photos can be used for the child to point to the appropriate word or sentence being said.

Some pointers:

- Use these activities with imagination and care as part of the child's whole programme, not as a series of daily exercises - try to make them part of everyday learning experiences. Seize every opportunity in your daily routine to take advantage of noises and continue to always point out various sounds to your child as they occur.
- Use sabotage - make a silly mistake so that your child can correct you.
- Initially these tasks are carried out with the child able to lip read. Then, encourage your child to listen without lip reading
- Model discrimination activities carefully to ensure that the child knows what to do.
- Keep a good balance between keeping him/her confident with the game by playing them often and introducing an element of surprise or freshness now and then to keep him/her interested.

Things to look for at this stage

Different responses to different sounds.

Attention to differences between and among sounds.

Experimenting with different sounds- enjoying exploring and making different noises with instruments, toys and voice.

Respond appropriately to angry and cheerful voices, daddy's and mummy's voices.