

Top Tips and Resources to support children with a hearing loss/deafness at home



Here is a list of activities, strategies and resources which can be implemented at home to support your child's speech, language and listening development. The activities are aimed at school-aged children and can be adapted to suit your child's level. Your child may find some of the activities/resources more fun than others. Similarly, some of the strategies may be more appropriate to your child than others. Have a play around and see how your child responds!

Activities

- ❖ **Listening Walks:** Whilst on walks with your child, encourage them to tune in to the sounds around them and talk about what they can hear (e.g. an aeroplane overhead, a bird chirping, crunching leaves). Draw your child's attention to sounds which you feel they may not be able to hear and point to and label these for them. Over time, see if your child can identify these sounds independently.
- ❖ **Pass The Rhythm:** Sit in a circle. One person in the family claps a rhythm and then each family member copies the rhythm in turn as you go around the circle. The rhythm can be made longer and more complex for older children.
- ❖ **Musical Instruments Game:** Introduce your child to some musical instruments and familiarise them with the sounds. Hide the instruments behind a screen and play one and see if your child can guess which one it was. This can be made more difficult by playing more than one instrument at a time or a sequence of instruments in succession. If you do not have access to any instruments, you could use online video clips.
- ❖ **Chain Games:** Support your child's auditory memory skills by taking it in turns to build on a sentence, adding a new item on every turn. For example, the first person says: "I went shopping and I bought a cake", the second person says: "I went shopping and I bought a cake and some apples" and so on. See how many items your child can recall. You can incorporate all kinds of themes, e.g. 'I went on holiday and I packed...', 'I went to space and I took...', 'I made a potion and in it I put...' etc. Incorporate your child's interests.
- ❖ **Barrier Games:** Sit opposite your child at the table. Place a small screen between you so that you cannot see what the other person is doing at the table. However, ensure that your child can see your face to enable lip reading and visual cues. Make sure you both have the same equipment, e.g. a piece of paper and red, blue and green colouring pencils. Take it in turns to be the instructor, e.g. 'Draw a blue monster with green feet', 'Draw a red hat on the monster's head'. You can reduce/increase the number of keywords in the instruction as appropriate. When you have finished, remove the screen and see whether you have both drawn a similar picture. You can play barrier games using other items, including Lego (building models), print out maps (describing locations) and toy clothes/accessories (dressing a doll/Mr. Potato Head).

- ❖ **What am I?** : Draw a picture of an object on a Post-it Note and put it on a family member's forehead. The other members of the family take it in turns to give clues to help the person guess what the object is. Support your child to give descriptive information (e.g. Who uses it? What does it do? Where do you find it? What does it look like? What is the first/last sound? What does it rhyme with?) Take it in turns to be the guesser. Similar games include **Who am I?** (relating to professions/familiar people/celebrities) and **Where am I?** (relating to locations).
- ❖ **Role-Play:** Practise role-playing different activities relevant to the child (e.g. asking a child if they can join a game, asking for repetition/clarification, buying an item in a shop, speaking on the telephone). Teach your child language scripts to support their confidence and encourage them to use the language and interaction skills learnt in real-life situations.
- ❖ **Real-Life Language Opportunities:** Model language for your child throughout the day. For example, you could make a cake together. As you do so, model any new vocabulary (e.g. specific ingredients), provide simple instructions, see if your child can predict what might come next etc. Afterwards, see if your child can talk you through how the cake was made step-by-step. Encourage use of linking words, such as 'first...next...last'.

Strategies

- ❖ Ensure hearing equipment is worn consistently.
- ❖ Background noise should be kept to a minimum when communicating with your child (make sure the TV and radio are off/turned down).
- ❖ Face your child when talking to them so they can lip read and pick up on facial expression and body language.
- ❖ Do not stand in front of a window or light source as this will cast shadow on your face and make it difficult for your child to see your face clearly.
- ❖ Do not cover your face when speaking and be mindful that it can be more difficult to lip read someone who has a beard and/or moustache.
- ❖ Speak steadily and clearly. Do not over-exaggerate words as this can distort lip patterns and make it more difficult to determine what you are saying.
- ❖ Avoid shouting as this can be uncomfortable for hearing aid/cochlear implant users.
- ❖ Teach your child specific clarification strategies to use if they have misheard/misunderstood (e.g. 'Please can you say that a bit louder?', 'I do not understand one of the words you used...please can you explain it').
- ❖ Check that your child has understood by asking them to repeat back information – or even better to explain what you want them to do.
- ❖ Use talking strategies such as modelling (repeating back your child's sentence clearly and correctly) and expansion (repeating back your child's utterance adding 1-2 words).
- ❖ Engage in rich verbal communication with your child to expose them to complex vocabulary and grammar as appropriate.
- ❖ Use signing if appropriate for your child.
- ❖ Encourage older children to express which strategies they find helpful vs. unhelpful.
- ❖ Encourage younger children to come up with their own name for their hearing aids/cochlear implants.
- ❖ Read books about children with hearing loss and introduce younger children to toys with hearing aids/cochlear implants.

Resources:

- <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/> - National Deaf Children's Society website (lots of useful information, resources and support).
- <https://www.royaldeaf.org.uk/> - Royal Association for Deaf People website (as above). See also NDCS and RAD Facebook pages.
- <https://advancedbionics.com/au/en/portals/consumer-portal/resources1/apps.html> - A range of free fun apps to support your child's speech, language and listening skills.
- <https://thelisteningroom.com/> - Free speech, language and listening activities for all ages.
- <https://www.british-sign.co.uk/> - Online introductory British Sign Language (BSL) course (currently at a reduced rate).
- <https://www.sense.org.uk/sense-sign-school/> - Free online BSL lessons taught by Tyrese, a 15-year-old.
- http://www.deafbooks.co.uk/Free-Downloads_B5-5.aspx - Free BSL downloads (including signed songs, category vocab etc.).