

Developmental Area: Auditory
Skill Strand: Auditory Attention
Skill Phase: Systematic Preparation
Skill Step: I am at the 'Two-Channelled Attention' stage of development.

Auditory Attention Skill Step 13

You may be wanting to facilitate this skill step with most of your children if you are considering targeted skill progression and creating firm foundations for progression. You may want to facilitate this skill step with just a few children or with an individual target child as this is their next step.

Whatever the reason, this Practical Ideas Sheet will help you to reflect on your current practice and maybe to get some new ideas. Where possible, the practical ideas are grouped into the three layers of your practice.

Interactions

At this point, the child should be beginning to cope with you interacting with them even when you are not face-to-face, as the child is developing the ability to listen at the same time as they look at or do something else. However, in busier learning environments and where there are lots of distractions, it will still be beneficial to position yourself opposite the child and on their level.

When adding language, consider your language load, trying to match this to the child's level of success with Auditory Memory for Understanding and Vocabulary.

At this level, the child should be coping quite well with group interactions. However, during larger group interactions or when the language demand is higher, the following strategies may continue to be beneficial:

- Sit the child opposite you, especially if they are at an earlier level of success compared with others in the group.
- Use visual support alongside the language you add.
- Include a lot of activities that focus on 'doing' not just quiet sitting and listening. It's about getting a balance.
- As you use visual support and speak to a group, remember the mantra - Go slow and show, say less and stress!

Targeted Use of the Learning Environment and Daily Routines

Generally, weaving a greater focus on turn-taking throughout your provision can have a significant and positive effect on Auditory Attention. Although turn-taking is contained within the Conversation & Group Skill Strand, there is an underlying link here.

Identify existing opportunities where you facilitate turn-taking already, e.g. snack

time or taking it in turns to go down the slide. Optimise and make the most of these opportunities.

Identify resources that lend themselves to turn-taking routines, e.g. rolling a car down the ramp of a garage, taking it in turns to add a wooden block to build a group tower, rolling a ball or rolling a ball down a piece of pipe you have outside, etc.

Create opportunities to take turns using such resources with this child and a few other children. Weave this into your provision. It is really useful to talk about this with your Team so that everybody knows what and where the turn-taking opportunities are. The Team also need to know who to focus on with these opportunities and at what level.

At this level, encourage the child to transfer these skills and the concept of turn-taking into other types of play with other children, where turn-taking slowly becomes sharing.

Focussed Activities

Existing activities will already support this skill such as songs and rhymes and stories. In addition to the interaction strategies being utilised during such group work, focussing on activities that facilitate early Auditory Discrimination can really support this. These might include:

- From a small choice of musical instruments, can they copy and make the same sound as you. If the child can do this when they see you using the musical instrument, can they then listen and copy when you create a visual barrier. This might involve playing the musical instrument under a blanket or behind a box you are using as a screen. Can the child then make the same sound as you?
- Copying beats and rhythms with musical instruments or with body percussion.
- Matching animal/transport/human/environmental sounds to a small choice of objects or pictures. A choice of 6 is usually a good amount, ensuring that there is enough choice but also making sure that the task is not too visually overwhelming. You can choose 6 sounds and objects/pictures from the same topic. However, it might be easier, at the beginning, to mix the items from different topics. This makes the sounds less similar from an auditory point of view, the objects/picture less similar from a visual point of view and also making the vocabulary less close from a vocabulary point of view.
- Listening lottos where children have to match a picture to a picture on their board when they hear a sound. These are commercially available. However, you can make your own. As an alternative to picture-to-picture matching when they hear a sound, children could put a glass bead or a counter on their board to match the sound they have just heard.

Such activities also correlate strongly with Phonic Preparation so consider how you use that time. Also be aware of the opportunities you have already and that, when considering planning, such activities can be seen as preparing skills for Phonic Readiness.

Building on these activities, shifting your focus to Auditory Memory can also help. Can the child carry out similar activities but listen to and hold 2 sounds and then 3 sounds? Can they do this in the right order? This would be Sequential Auditory Memory.