

10 Strategies for Listening and Spoken Language: How and when to use them

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Before any strategy can be successful, it is imperative to make sure the child's hearing aids/cochlear implant(s) are in working order including the child's F.M. system if appropriate. Below is a list of strategies commonly used when working with a child on listening and spoken language development.

1. Auditory sandwich - like an "Oreo". The chocolate represents the auditory information and the cream center is for additional visual information. Present the information to the child initially with auditory only information. If the child needs additional information because he/she did not understand what was stated, give visual information such as a picture to help understand the message and then lastly give the child the information again auditory only. It is like a sandwich - auditory info first, if the child does not understand then add visual information through a picture and finally give information through auditory only. This will help the child to make sure he/she understands and clarifies what information was given.
2. Direct to listen - Make sure that the child's name is called before any information is given. Many children with hearing loss typically do not learn incidentally. We must gain the child's attention first to make sure he/she "hears" the information being shared.
3. Wait for a response - versus just talk, talk, talk. A child with hearing loss need time to process the information he/she hears. The speaker needs to pause and give the child time to process this information and additional time to produce a response. If the speaker continues to talk, the child is not part of the conversation.
4. Do not just repeat your message – ask the child, “*What did you hear?*” The end goal is to have the child be able to “trust his/her hearing”. If the message is just repeated, the child does not have the opportunity to rely on his/her hearing and learn how to listen to ensure the message is understood.
5. Reword/rephrase your message - when the child does not understand. Do not repeat the same message. If the child hears the message with different vocabulary, he/she may understand the message without using any additional strategies.
6. Acoustic highlighting/whispering - can be accomplished through getting closer to the child's microphone. With your voice, emphasize the word or sound you want the child to produce correctly. Typically, the adult's voice will say that word or sound a little bit louder enabling the child to hear the pattern in order for the child to produce it correctly. If the sound you are working on is a voiceless sound (not a sound that creates vocal cord vibrations), try whispering the voiceless sound as modeled above.
7. Chunking information - involves breaking down the information into smaller chunks of information. Instead of giving instructions in a long sentence, break it into two or three parts depending on the child's listening abilities. For example, instead of saying, "It's time to go to the store, get your shoes on and I will put you in your car seat." A better way to say this is, "It's time to go to the store." Pause and look for recognition from the child and continue "Get your shoes on and I will put you in your car seat."

8. Partial Modeling - give the children only partial information and have the child say the rest on their own. To help the child produce a complete sentence involving, "I want" the adult might need to start the sentence with an acoustically highlighted "I" and then expectantly look at the child to produce the rest of the sentence.
9. Prompting - use prompts, questions, or clues to help the child produce the targeted elements. If the child is ready, move from less modeling to more prompting, which helps the child to be more independent in conversations.
10. Combination – use the strategies above in various combinations. For example, highlighting is often included with another technique such as chunking.

Checks for understanding need to be happening frequently to ensure the child understands the message. These checks of understanding can be assessed through open-ended questions.