

Activities to develop attention and listening skills in older children

Run and touch

A game best played outside. Identify 4 or 5 different things in the area, e.g: climbing frame, tree, gate, seat, etc. Give an instruction: "Run to the seat". When the children can do this, make instructions longer: "Run to the tree then the gate."

Silly stories

Warn the children that you or a puppet are going to make mistakes as you tell a familiar story. The child has to listen carefully and spot the mistakes. How many can the child spot? You can make this more difficult by making the children take turns, e.g: "Chloe, it's your turn to spot the next mistake", and the other children have to listen and remain quiet.

Personalised stories

Make up a story about the children and every time you say one of their names they have to stand up. This is most effective in groups of 4-6 children. Start with 4, then build up to 6 as the children become better at listening for longer periods.

Hide and seek

The children hide up to eight objects around the room or outside. Ask each child to find the one you ask for. As the children become more able, ask them to find two or more objects.

Go! (or Simon Says)

Give instructions but the children must wait until you say 'go' to carry them out. Vary the time between the instruction and 'go'. Gradually increase the complexity of the instructions. Examples of instructions to start with: 'Touch your toes.... Go!' 'Jump up and down 3 times.... Go!', etc. In Simon Says, the children must continue to listen carefully to make sure you have said 'Simon Says' before your instruction.

Roll the ball

The children sit in a circle. The teacher holds a ball and says "My name is... and I'm going to roll the ball to..." The recipient must listen to wait for their name to be called. As the children become more able, a 'topic' can be added- eg, the person holding the ball can tell the group about their weekend news or their favourite food before passing the ball on.

Guessing games

Play games such as '20 questions', 'guess who' type games. Put objects or pictures in a bag, take turns to choose one and then the other children ask questions to guess what the object is ie, is it an animal? Does it live on a farm? You could also play "I spy" games.

Drawing games

The child has to listen to instructions about what to draw ie, draw a red circle or draw a house with a green door. Make the instructions harder and longer as the child's skills develop.

Memory Games

Kim's game - Place four or more items on the floor. The child closes their eyes then once they open them they have to try to guess which items you have removed.

I went shopping and bought... - Play this in a small group or with individual children and increase the number of items the child has to remember.

Shopping list game - Make a list of items that you want the child to find, from the classroom. Gradually increase the amount of items that the child has to remember.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net