

LISTENING SKILLS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS

If the student is suspected of problems of listening, check for physical (hearing deficit), developmental (student's comprehension), and cultural (e.g., bilingualism) reasons. Once these potential reasons for listening failure have been eliminated, proceed with the following:

Establish simple rules for listening (e.g., listen when others are talking, ask questions if you do not comprehend, etc.).

Minimize competing messages (e.g., at home, turn off TV or radio; at school, make sure peers take turns expressing their opinion, etc.).

Demonstrate appropriate listening skills by listening to the student, or placing him/her around peers who display good listening skills.

Use body language (e.g., pointing, facial expressions consistent with message, etc.) to reinforce oral messages.

Seat the student near the source of information.

Especially with young students, avoid “double-bind” messages; that is, say only what you really mean.

Give short, precise directions and explanations, which can gradually increase in length as the student demonstrates success.

When delivering complex directions, explanations, or instructions, stop at key points to make sure the student understands. Phrase directions and explanations in multiple ways to increase the likelihood of comprehension.

Give written directions in addition to verbal directions. If possible, also demonstrate directions while presenting them.

Introduce important messages that you do not want the student to miss. You might want to start out by saying, “Maria, listen carefully...” Tell the student what to listen for before giving directions.

Call the student by name, and have his/her peers do the same, before speaking to him/her.

Open group activities with instructions on selected listening skills, such as “stop physical activity when others speak to you” or “look at the person who is talking to you, etc.”

To encourage the student's self-monitoring, use a visual cueing device. For example, during a lecture, at random intervals show a 3" x 5" card with a big question mark on it to prompt students to ask themselves, "Am I listening?"

Have the student evaluate him/herself using a checklist of listening skills after listening activities such as a lecture or group discussion.

Have the student repeat or paraphrase what has just been said. This will allow you to make sure that the message came across. During class discussions, require the speaker to summarize the statements of the previous speaker.

As the student progresses on his/her listening skills, gradually increase the length of time (or number of activities in which) the student is required to listen.

Have the student take notes during lectures or instruction. Have the student generate possible test questions as part of the note-taking lecture.

Have the student follow an outline form when taking notes that answers important information questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how).

Allow the student to tape record lectures to review at his own pace.

Instruct the student to "echo" in his/her mind information just heard, so that he/she can remember the important facts. When lecturing, allow time for students to do so.

Encourage the student to relate topics of instruction to his/her own personal experience whenever possible. Also consider reading short, interesting articles to the students and having them provide possible headlines. Have the students watch a specific news program and take notes on the main points. Then have the students compare their notes to check for accuracy of main point identification. Show the students various commercials and have them identify the propaganda techniques used in each.

Divide the students into groups to debate an issue. After each side presents their position, the next group must paraphrase that position before presenting their own. The other groups provide feedback regarding the accuracy of their position.

Provide the students with a "story starter" and have each student continue the story with a new sentence.

Play the audio to a movie or videotape, and ask the students to write down the action they envision with the sounds. Compare the ideas with the actual video.

Use fun games to teach listening skills (e.g., Red Light-Green Light, Mother May I?, Simon Says.)

Encourage, but do not force, the student to interact with others.

Allow the student to serve as messenger. Have the student deliver and return verbal messages to other teachers in the school.

Acknowledge the student's listening with either verbal praise (e.g., “Good, I can see you're listening) **or with something more tangible** (“e.g., line leading, extra free time, etc.). In the student's presence, do the same to other students who listen.

When the student fails to listen to what you or others said, immediately let him/her know what he/she did, and how he/she could do better. For example, you might say, “Henry, you're not listening to me. Please put those baseball cards aside for a moment and look at me in the eye.”

Additional Resources:

Decker, C. (1994). *Listening skills: Instructor lesson guide*. Eric Document (ED371151).

Ur, P. (1984). *Teaching listening comprehension*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

<http://mccweb.mcc.cc.tx.us/departments/spch/listening.php>: Listening.

www.articlesforeducators.com/general/000001.asp: Listening Games and Activities.

www.okcareertech.org/cimc/downloads/Sample-Activities.pdf: Improving Listening Skills.

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