

Activities to Develop Auditory Memory Skills

Fun games are a good way of developing your child's auditory memory. Auditory memory is simply training the brain to retain information and recall it when required. A child needs to develop their auditory memory to be able to follow instructions as they become more complex. Developing auditory memory will also help your child to develop their reading skills as they learn how to remember sounds required for decoding words. Here are some activities and games that you may want to try. They are designed to be short activities some of which can be done in the car, bath, on a walk or at home and require little or no resources. Build these fun activities into your child's day to help develop their auditory memory.

Shopping Game

Gather some random everyday objects that you may have in your house eg. toothpaste, plate, spoon, apple, saucepan (the list is endless). Set them up as a shop. Give them a shopping bag (we all have one lying somewhere) and give them a verbal instruction to go to the shop to get the messages for you. Begin with two objects eg. 'can you go to the shop and get me a bowl and a toothbrush?' Once they are able to carry out this instruction successfully, build on it by adding another object to the list and continue to build the number of objects requested.

Treasure Hunt/Orienteering

This is similar to the shopping game except that the objects are not set out in a shop fashion. Ask the child to fetch two objects from different parts of the house eg. 'Catch you bring me a cushion and a shoe?' As before, build up the number of objects requested. You can make it more competitive by having a stop watch so that it is a race. This is also a good game to develop language – teaching children the names of objects in the house.

STEP UP: Try giving the child instructions to find a hidden object. Again, initially you could give instructions one at a time, but as they improve you could give 2 or 3 instructions together. This could be made very motivating if you hide a treat or favourite toy eg. "go to the kitchen door, take 4 paces into the kitchen and look under the bowl".

Chaining games

Chaining games are games whereby each person takes it in turn to add another piece of information to an established sentence. Start by saying, "I went to the shop and I bought..." and add one item. Your child then repeats that phrase – what you bought – and then adds an item to the list. Keep adding items until one of you forgets an item. This helps them strengthen their auditory memory as they are trying to remember a long list of items. Make sure only to list items they know.

This can also be a good game to use if you want to reinforce the alphabet eg. Person 1 says 'I went to the shop and I bought an apple', person 2 says 'I went to the shop and I bought an apple and a banana'. Person 1 then has to recall the two objects and add an additional one. This can be extended so that it's not a shop – you can make it as imaginative as you want incorporating some category work eg.

I went to school and I saw....

I went to the North Pole and I saw...

I went to space and I saw...

I went to the play park and saw...

I went to the zoo and I saw...

You can develop this further by adding in an adjective (describing word) eg. pink flamingo, big slide, hungry polar bear, etc.

Expanding Sentences

This is similar to chaining games, but you add information to each other's ideas. You could make some interesting stories. Again, when it is your turn you have to recap the sentences that have been generated so far and then add a new piece of information eg.

"I played Minecraft."

"I played Minecraft on Saturday"

"I played Minecraft on Saturday and built a house out of sandstone"

"I played Minecraft on Saturday and built a house out of sandstone and a creeper blew it up!"

Remembering parts of a story

When you are reading with your child, before you turn the page over, ask specific questions about the page you have just read. What was the boy's name? Where did they travel to? What did they forget? etc. This is a great activity as it also helps the child learn how to extract key pieces of information.

Recall of a spoken sequence

List items and see if the child can remember them. Start at an easy level, for example 2 items and then gradually increase. You could try

Numbers e.g. 5, 1, 6, 9

Colours e.g. red, blue, yellow, green

Animals e.g. cat, dog, fox, sheep etc.

You could extend this and when you go shopping ask the child to remember a few items that you need e.g. toothpaste, apples and bread. Then as you walk around the shops they have to remember and collect their items.

Remembering a specific item

You could ask the child to remember an item at the start of an activity and then ask them what it was at the end. This requires them to remember over time.

Taking messages

If there is another adult or child available, you could ask the child to take a message to them. For example “Tell your brother tea is ready and he needs to come downstairs”, “Tell dad there is a letter for him on the table”. If necessary you can let the other person know the message so they can help the child remember if they have difficulty. Begin with simple instructions and then build them up in complexity according to your child’s ability.

Drawing to instruction

You could encourage the child to draw a picture and give them directions to follow. You can also turn this activity round and get the child to tell you what to draw and you then have a great language activity! You could describe something simple like a house, or a treasure map – whatever your child is interested in. You can always draw the outline and just get your child to put on specific details e.g. draw a square for house and ask your child to put on a green door on the left, then maybe 2 blue windows at the top.

Alternatively, you could use a colouring in book and select one of the pages. Give them specific verbal instructions on which colours to use for particular parts of the picture or why not add in some objects eg. ‘Colour the alien green’, ‘Write the letter M next to the moon’, ‘Draw a line from the earth to the moon’, ‘Draw someone inside the rocket’.

You can increase or decrease the length of the instruction for your child sometimes adding 2-part instructions. eg. Draw a house on a hill, draw 2 windows on the house and add a red roof, draw 2 clouds in the sky.

So have a try! Remember to start at an easy level and gradually make it harder. Also find strategies that help your child and encourage them to use them in the games.

Remember to take into consideration your child’s hearing loss – listening can be an exhausting activity for a child with a hearing loss – make these activities short and fun. This way you will also be developing their listening stamina. Enjoy!

Some of these activities were adapted from Speechbloguk

For further advice please contact the Sensory Service via phone: 028 25 661 258 or email: sensoryservice@eani.org.uk