

Our Children, Their Future,
Our Vision

Improving lives





**Developing
Attention for
Communication**

Improving lives



Introductions

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ASD/Resourced Provision Teams

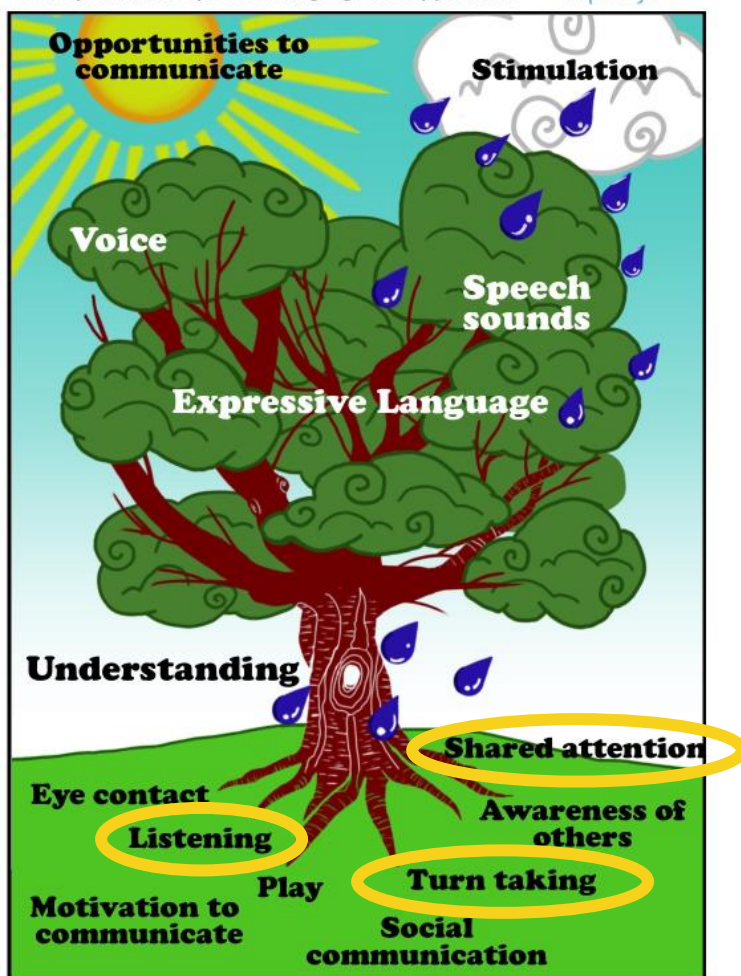
Aims for today's session

- What is 'good attention' and why is it important for communication?
- What difficulties do we see in children who might need support with their attention?
- How you can help your child in your day to day life to improve their attention; top tips!
- Games to play with your child to help improve their attention

Attention and Listening Development

The Communication Tree

Bexley Children's Speech & Language Therapy Service



Just like a tree that needs good roots to be able to grow, successful communication needs a range of foundational skills which include (amongst others):

- Listening
- Shared attention
- Turn taking

Attention skills for a primary aged child

What attention skills could we expect a key stage one child to have?

4-5 years old

Children of this age are expected to be able to switch their attention between activities with minimal adult support. They are expected to be able to carry out an activity whilst listening to an instruction at the same time. Attention span can still be quite short at this age.

5-6 years old

Children of this age are expected to have well established, fully integrated attention skills and to need minimal support from an adult.



How poor attention might affect a child's communication development

If a child is not able to sustain and switch their attention they may have difficulty;

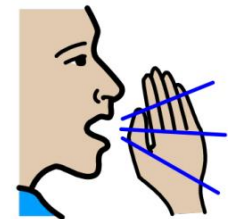
- Following what the teacher is asking them to do in the classroom
- Sitting still on a chair or on the carpet for a period of time
- Being able to complete a task in the classroom or at home
- Picking up on new vocabulary that is being used by others
- Being able to participate in and follow conversations with peers
- Expressing their ideas in a clear and sequenced manner
- Being able to take turns with peers and play cooperatively

How you can help your child's attention skills in day to day life

Before speaking to your child and/or giving them an instruction;

- Ensure you are facing them and ideally get down to their level

- Use their name at the start and wait for them to respond



- Give instructions in 'chunks' so they don't have to hold too much information at once

- Give them extra time to process what you have said to them



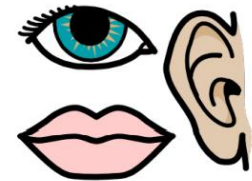
How you can help your child's attention skills in day to day life

- Observe them and praise for any signs of good listening **before** you notice a problem;
“I can see you are listening to mummy because you are looking at me”



- Reduce/remove likely distractions before you need to gain their attention eg, pause/switch off the screen

- Model and promote ‘active listening’ – showing with our face and our body that we are listening to them



Conversation skills

In conversation, children with reduced attention skills may need support with turn-taking and topic maintenance. You can help by:

- Playing turn-taking games as a family; have a talking object, if the person is holding the object it is their turn to talk. Praise everyone for waiting for their turn and not interrupting
- Use a 'good listening' and/or 'good waiting' visual as a reminder
- As a family, take some time to share news about your day; make sure everyone has a turn
- Try using a 'chat bag'; put some topic examples in a bag and everyone has a turn to pick one out; this is the topic you all talk about during your chat time



Visuals

Often children find it easier to attend when visuals are used alongside the spoken word

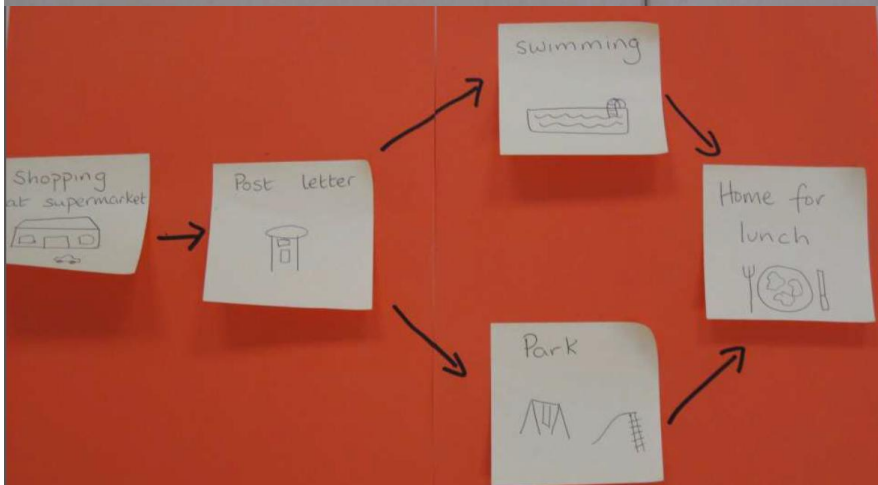
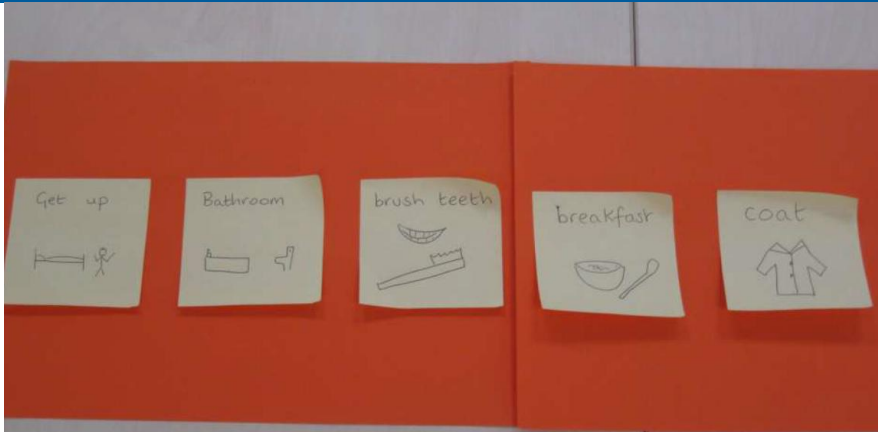
You could try:

- A now and next (or first and then) board
- A visual time table (eg for certain routines of the day)
- A reward chart
- A task management board
- Timers; a sand-timer or use the one on your phone

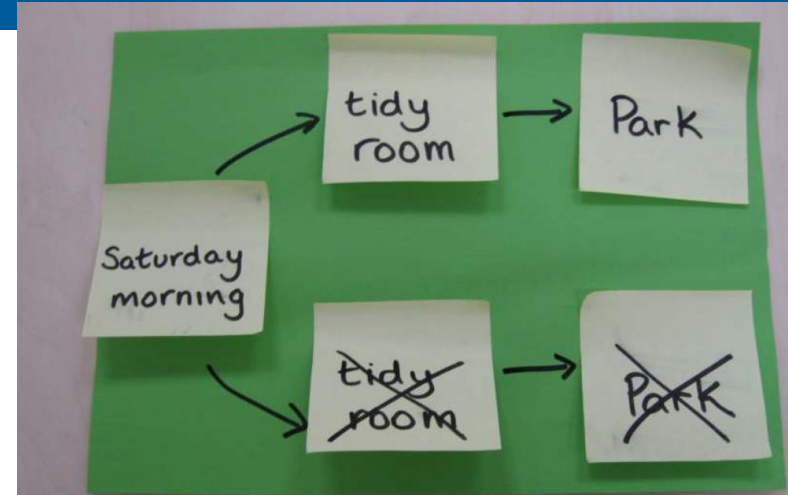
Have a chat with your child's school to see what they use so that you can do the same at home

Even if you think your child has listened to and understood the instruction, it can still help to use the visual support as a reminder

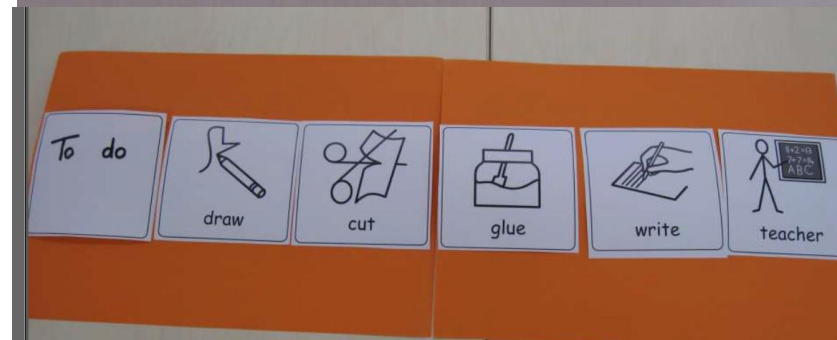
Examples of visual support systems you could use



From: Johnson M. (2009) *Helping Children Hang On To Your Every Word*. QEd Publications: Stafford

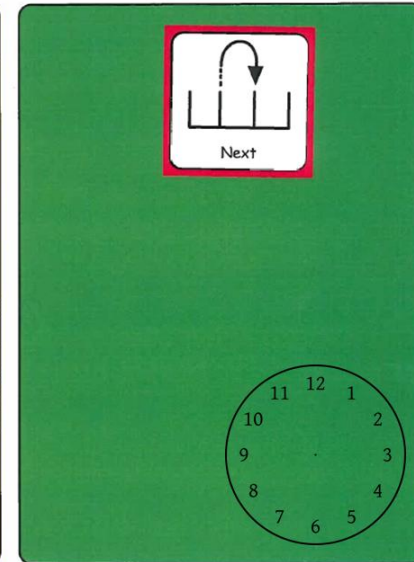
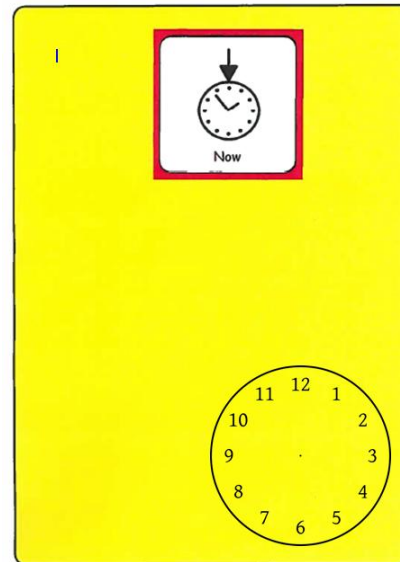
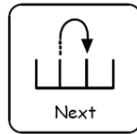
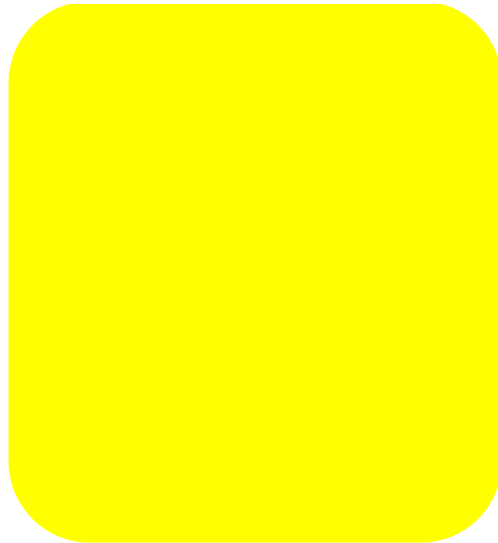
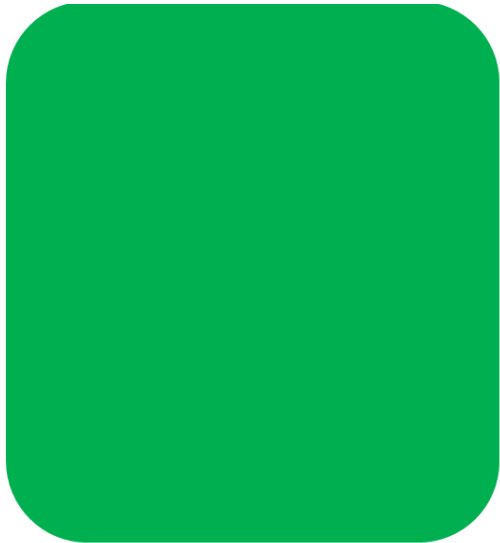


From: Johnson M. (2009) *Helping Children Hang On To Your Every Word*. QEd Publications: Stafford



From: Hayden S. and Jordan E. (2007) *Language for Learning: A Practical Guide for supporting Pupils with Language and Communication Difficulties across the Curriculum*. Abingdon: Routledge

Examples of visual support systems you could use




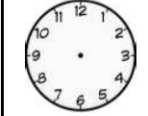

Examples of visual support systems you could use

My Task Management Board

Task: → What equipment do I need?

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>

I will be finished when: 

Task: <input type="text"/>	Start time 	Finish time 
What do I need?		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 		
What do I have to do?		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 		

References:
 McLachlan H. and
 Elks L. (2008)
*Secondary
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 and Activities to
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 ELKLAN

Johnson M.
 (2009) *Helping
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 To Your Every
 Word.*
 QEd Publications:
 Stafford

Games to play at home to help develop attention



- Barrier games; eg listen and colour
- A listening walk...what sounds can you hear in the park today?
- Checklist of things to look out for on your walk/shopping trip/car journey
 - I went to the shops and I bought...



- Spot the deliberate mistake in the familiar story or rhyme
 - Copying a rhythm
 - Kim's game
 - Simon says



1	88	×	×
4	×	25	×
×	×	11	×

- Games such as snap, matching pairs, and bingo where your child has to pay attention in order to win!



See 'Listen Up' advice booklet from *The Communication Trust*

Questions

Any questions about how to support your child's attention skills?

Oxleas
NHS

Thank you

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