

Schools Therapy Resource Pack

Section 6c –
Attention, Listening
& Organisation

Introduction

Children can find attention and concentration within the classroom challenging for a number of reasons. Possible factors:

Person - amount of sleep or tiredness, illness, nutrition, hydration, skill development such as understanding of language, understanding of social norms and expectations, strength and exercise tolerance, motivation, fear or other emotional challenges like grief. They could be either very active or more passive and unresponsive.

Environment –Busy, noisy, smells, expectations, lights, layout of classroom and peers.

Occupation - May be because a child has had limited opportunities to develop sustained attention or finds school activities more challenging than peers, interesting activities.

What do you see? - a child who appears not to listen, be impulsive and have poor organisational skills. It is helpful to check whether the child is the same in all settings - in school, at home and during other play activities. It would also be useful for parents to discuss any concerns with the child's GP or Paediatrician.

Just as with adults, there is now increasing awareness that some children have underdeveloped or inefficient ways of organising sensations. They can be over or under-reactive to inputs such as touch, visual stimuli and sound; they may find it hard to keep an upright posture and may seek out or be easily distracted by body movements. They may find it hard to integrate sensory information so as to respond in an organised and helpful way.

[See also Sensory Challenges Section.]

It appears that by providing the right amount and type of sensory input, children can be helped to be in a better state for learning and this can often make them feel more comfortable and supports the child to learn strategies which help them.

This approach can be thought of as helping an engine to run at the right speed, not fast and not slowly. There are specific programmes that use this approach such as The Alert Programme: "How does your engine run?" Please see the training and resource list for more details.

General Strategies

You probably are doing many of these already but you might need to be structured into the day.

Gain the child's attention

Use his name or "cue" words, e.g., "Look", "Listen".

Gain eye contact

- Get down to the child's level, so you can get eye contact.
- Say the child's name.

- You may need to refocus the child's attention on many occasions.
- You may need to stop the child from what he is doing to ensure full listening and attention.
- Provide opportunities for movement at intervals during the day and particularly if you can see that children are becoming restless or inattentive e.g. cleaning the whiteboard, running errands, giving out equipment to peers, collecting equipment after an activity has finished, dance breaks, brain gym etc.
- Provide a movement break outside the classroom e.g. walking or running around the playground, jumping up to touch a high point on the wall. **NB: Do not take away outdoor play opportunities as a sanction for fidgety behaviour as this is counterproductive.**
- Do a whole class 'wake up stretch'. Demonstrate stretching the body and tensing the muscles, followed by relaxing and 'flopping'; letting out a big sigh may also help) - exaggerate the movement!
- A child helps the teacher to move large pieces of gym equipment e.g. gym benches and mats (be mindful of correct lifting procedure).
- Try using a wobble or move 'n' sit cushion – see details in Resource List.
- Consider if the child has had breakfast. Would a small, healthy snack (e.g. banana) put them back on track?
- Allow frequent access to a water bottle, kept on the desk or readily accessible. Consider adding a slice of lemon or lime if this is helpful to the child.
- Try timers which allow the child to see how long he/she needs to concentrate on a task and set targets.
- Give the child a 'fidget toy' to use when you want him / her to listen for any length of time – check that this is a help and not a distraction.
- Praise success and use frequent, positive encouragement e.g. "That was good, now let's see if we can ..."
- Give specific praise to encourage active listening e.g. "good looking!", "good listening!", and "good sitting!"
- Use visual clues e.g. pictures, gestures, objects, writing alongside spoken language

- Work individually or in a group for focused tasks

Use visual clues

- Whenever possible, use visual clues to assist the child's understanding and recall. This is particularly important because the child's memory and sequencing skills may well be reduced.
- Clues might include demonstration, gesture, pictures, symbols and writing.
- It is often useful to display any visual clues where pupils can refer back to it as necessary without needing to ask an adult or other pupil.

Classroom Environment

- Think about **where the child is sitting in relation to you** when you are talking. His attention will be better if he can see and hear you easily.
- It may help to place the child at the front of the class, directly in front of the board if possible or in line with the teacher when floor sitting. Consider 'high traffic' routes such as to the sink, water bottles, resources, door as these are distracting areas.
- Think about **who the child is sitting with** - are they going to be distracted by that person or assisted?
- Use a carpet square on the floor to create a defined space for circle time.
- If child has poor postural control on the floor, encourage stable sitting position (e.g. cross-legged) or leaning against furniture.
- **Have the right size of chair** for the child is sitting on – physical restlessness can affect the ability to attend, it can also help some children to listen and understand.
- Ensure consistent organisation of classroom resources, using clear labels (symbols, pictures or words).
- Remove distracting materials which may be cluttering the child's table, this could also be different colours on the table, not just objects.
- Be aware of any competing sounds and visual distractions, which may make it harder for children to know what they should be attending to e.g. shut the classroom door. This may mean that children need to carry out independent focused work in a separate space or using head phones or a privacy screen.

Written tasks

- Keep printed/ written alphabet and number lines nearby and refer to them if s/he forgets how to write a letter or a number.
- When copying information from another book or sheet of paper use a ruler or blank sheet of paper under each line of print (or line-tracker - *see Resource List*).
- Get the children into the habit of making a brief outline before writing (e.g. list key words) to help prompt what s/he wants to write. They could try an audio recording/ dictaphone/ tape recorder if writing is difficult.
- Keep a diary of words the child has trouble spelling so that it can be referred to easily when writing.
- Try saying written work out loud; this may help child notice and correct mistakes.
- Seek advice from Teacher Adviser for Information Technology regarding equipment available for alternative methods of recording. [PENSIP in Portsmouth]

Following instructions

- Repeat instructions
- Give one instruction at a time
- Use key words, short phrases, concrete language
- Break the task down into small steps - work on one step at a time
- Ask the child to demonstrate and review how to play a game before starting.
- Tick off tasks as they are completed
- Provide examples (use visual, auditory and tactile prompts)
- Ask the child to repeat and explain the instructions before beginning
- Team up with a peer in the class who understands the task instructions and can help
- Place a child next to a peer who provides a good model and can help immediately
- Break down the instructions into small steps
- Use flowcharts -Flowcharts help the child remember each part of an instruction and therefore complete tasks more independently
- Children with language difficulties often cannot remember or process more than one item of information at a time.
- Highlight important words for the child to listen for

- Reduce the amount of junk language you use
- Ask the child to run errands with a short message to remember
- Encourage the child to repeat an instruction to a peer

Staying on task

- Seat child away from window/door and/or in front of teacher
- Consider which time of day is better for demanding tasks so the child will be at his/her 'best'
- Start the child on short tasks which require concentration - gradually increase this
- Provide frequent reinforcement - lots of praise!
- Ask questions to help prompt child focus on next step
- Use a timer to indicate when the task is to be finished

Check Understanding

- Check if the child has understood your question | instruction.
- Encourage him to indicate to you when he has not understood. Think about why he might have failed to understand, for example:
- Sentence too long or grammatically complex
- New vocabulary
- Words used have more than one meaning
- Too many concepts in one sentence

Working independently

- Provide activities appropriate for the child's development level
- Alternate short, independent tasks with those which require some assistance. Grade tasks so that the child is gradually required to increase the amount of independent work

Coping with change

- Provide structure and routine; visual timetable may help.
- Encourage flexibility and acceptance of change using a symbol for change or surprise (? or !), introducing change into the timetable from time to time.

Moderate your own Speaking

Be aware of the speed of your own speech – rapid speech is harder to process

Activities to develop Listening and Attention Skills

Draw a House

Work in pairs. One member instructs his partner to draw a house. The person drawing should do exactly what his partner says.

Classroom discussion can focus on giving and receiving verbal instructions.

Skills involved *gelling eye contact gesture proximity listening volume memory asking questions listening responding co operating turn taking problem solving self-instruction self-monitoring negotiating*

“Who Is This?”

The group is seated in a circle. The leader gives a physical description of a group member, for example : “*brown hair, wearing a red jumper*”. The group has to guess who it is.

Skills involved *gelling observation eye contact gesture facial expression posture proximity presentation listening memory turn taking social perception problem solving self-monitoring assertion*

“What Am I Thinking Of?”

Gradually build up a verbal picture of an object. Start with three clues. Can Christy guess after two clues, three clues, etc. For example:

- a) 4 feet, fur – discuss that it could be any furry animal
- b) whiskers – discuss that it could be a [cat | lion]
- c) drinks milk
- d) and is a pet – therefore it is a cat.

Play Sound Lotto or Ordinary Lotto

The child must listen carefully to instructions individually or as part of a small group (i.e. two or three children). He must wait his turn and match items appropriately.

Give the child an outline of a picture to colour in.

Give him simple instructions to colour in the nose, hair, etc. He is only allowed to colour in one part at a time.

Get him used to words such as ‘wait’ and ‘go’.

Keep these activities short (no longer than five minutes at first). If this is too long try one minute, then this can be slowly increased.

You could make this into a barrier game so that you have a picture with different parts coloured in. Give the child instructions on what to colour in, for example : “*Colour the hat red.*”

When they have completed each stage, let them check their work against your drawing.

Construction could be built in to the tasks, so the child could listen for the correct item in a lotto game and cover it up with a brick or build a brick tower beside each item every time he hears it. Similarly he could listen out for a target word in a story and build a tower every time he hears it.

Listen And Jump

In a group, the child has to listen for his name. When he hears it he has to jump into the circle.

Favourite Things

Everyone says his favourite food, pet, TV programme and then the leader prompts: *“What was Fiona’s favourite pet?”*

Same and Different

Fill shakers, for example: Pringles packets or jars with different sound makers, for example : beads, dried peas, Ping-Pong ball, keys, etc.

Shake two that are the same. Allow the child to listen and then introduce the vocabulary – *“they’re the same”*. Then shake two that are different – *“they’re different”*.

See if he can tell you whether the sounds he hears are the same or different. If he is having difficulty telling you, try introducing symbols or signs for same and different and encouraging him to point to the appropriate one.

You could have three shakers at a time, with two the same, see if the child can identify the two that sound the same. Similarly you could shake one and give him two to shake. See if he can show you which one sounds the same as yours.

Turn-Taking

Traffic

It is first explained to the children that they will pretend to be cars but they will stay sitting down. In turn, each child must say “Brm!” as the car moves along. This is practised once around the circle, so that everyone has one go at saying “Brm!” The teacher then explains that each car is allowed to stop once, and to do this it must say “screech” (or “stop”). When this happens, the “Brm” sequence must change direction.

It is important that only one child is talking at one time and that the children get used to the idea of turn taking.

If the game fails, because someone has a go out of turn, talk about why the game failed (someone didn’t remember to take turns) and start again.

The Wave

The teacher begins the “wave” by making a non-verbal gesture, for example, clapping hands, stretching arms, raising one thumb in a “thumbs up” sign, putting a hand on one knee etc. The group has to repeat the action, in turn, so that the gesture moves like a wave round the circle. The teacher then changes the gesture on the second turn and the cycle starts again with the new action.

Sound Wave

This is played like the Wave above, but a sound or a word is repeated. Examples include animal sounds, noises of household objects, words in a category (for example, food).

Story Share

The first and last lines of a story (a well known fairy story is good) are written up on the board and read aloud. The teacher explains that she will begin the story with the first sentence and that the last member will end the story with the last sentence. The rest of

the group must “share” the story, by saying just enough to allow the last person to say the last sentence.

The Microphone

The group sits in a circle. Members discuss a topic, for example : TV, pets, holidays. You can only talk if you are holding the magic microphone.

Discuss turn taking with the group.

***Skills involved** eye contact facial expression gesture proximity listening volume memory initiation responding turn taking answering questions co-operation topic maintenance / repair*

Other Games

Use a ball of wool while children are talking.

Unravel it and give the thread to the child who is talking, who must keep hold.

Continue until the discussion has come to an end.

Discuss with the class who has [most | no] wool and why this has happened.

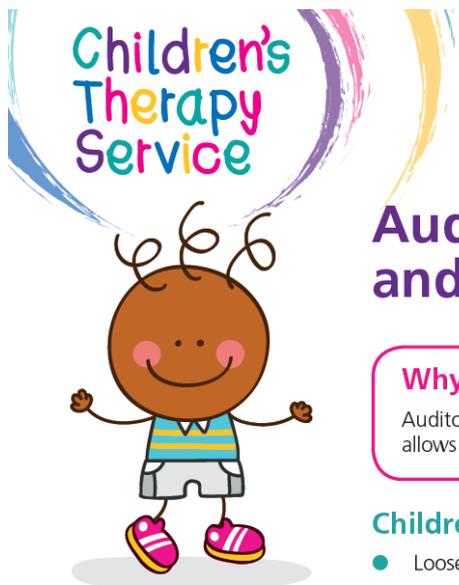
Use any game to talk about taking turns.

Encourage effort rather than performance.

Grade activities to guarantee initial success

Have a calming (low distraction) area of the classroom (with e.g. bean bag to sit on).

Auditory Memory and Processing



Auditory Memory and Processing

Why are these skills important?

Auditory memory is what helps us to remember what we hear. This in turn allows us to understand and learn. It overlaps with understanding of language

Children with poor auditory memory skills may:

- Loose concentration when listening
- Have difficulties in remembering what they hear
 - Have difficulties in following instructions
 - Have difficulty remembering what happened in class stories and discussions
 - Find it difficult to remember what has been taught previously
- Have difficulties remembering/doing things in the right order



Classroom based strategies to support auditory memory:

- Allow extra time for processing information by leaving pauses or speaking more slowly
- Use pictures to visually reinforce what is being said
- Tell the children how many things you would like them to remember at the end so that they can 'allocate' memory space accordingly
 - e.g. 'I want you to tell me three things about elephants'
 - 'I want you to remember all six of the names of Henry VIII's wives.'

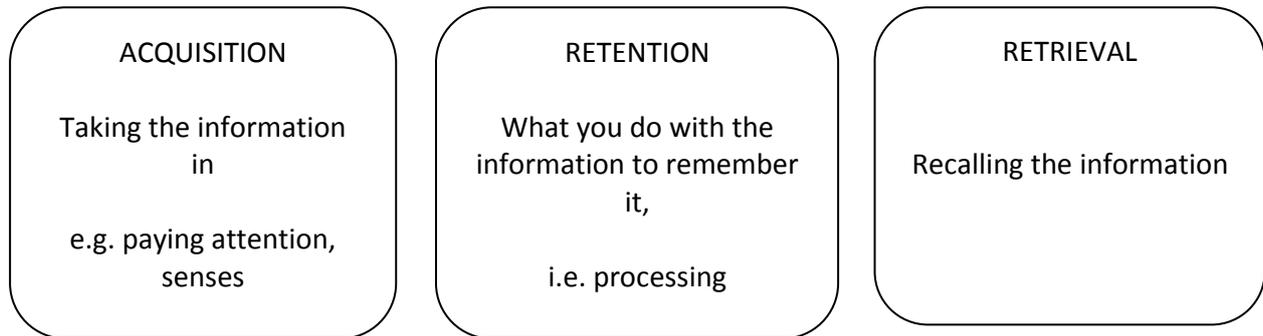
Teach strategies to support auditory memory skills:

- Encourage the children to allocate a finger to each instruction given. Encourage them to repeat the instruction back to themselves quietly.
 - e.g. (thumb) get your maths book, (first finger) then find a ruler, (thumb) maths book, (first finger) ruler.
- Encourage the children to assign a rhythm to the instruction
 - e.g. maths-book, ru-ler
- Encourage the children to close their eyes and visualise a scenario involving each piece of information. Use concrete descriptions and make up silly stories, pausing to check the child can 'see' it happening
 - e.g. you need to get your maths book – your maths book has the blue bumpy cover; but the maths book is hungry and it wants to eat a long ruler...



Auditory Memory

The process of memory can be divided into:



Difficulties can occur at any or all of the stages.

Child's Strategies

The child will need to be taught and encouraged to use these in different situations:

A. Acquisition

Teach the child to:

- a. Be aware of distractions and take responsibility for these, e.g. noise in/out of the classroom
- b. **Look** at the person talking
- c. Admit when he has not listened (teaching staff need to try not to react negatively)
- d. Ask for repetition – (teaching staff need to try not to react negatively)

B. Retention

Teach the child to:

- a. **Check back** after he has been asked to do something *“So you mean I have to ...”*
- b. **Rehearse**, i.e. say instruction to him/her self
- c. **Visualise**, i.e. convert spoken words into pictures in his/her head. Perhaps draw simple pictures to help.
- d. **Remember** as the teacher is talking
- e. **Ask** for time to think when needed, e.g. say *“I’m just thinking ...”*
- f. **Ask** when he does not understand or needs someone to speak louder or more slowly

C. Retrieval

Teach the child to:

- a) Remember word finding strategies, i.e. when s/he cannot remember the name of something, think about:

Meaning – what group does it belong to or what does it go with?

Think of another word for it or what is it like?
Where do you find it or what do you do with it?

Sound structure – “what does it begin with?
How many syllables has it got?
What does it rhyme with?
If he still cannot remember it – can he draw it?

Teacher Strategies

A. Acquisition

- a. **Gain** the child’s attention before giving an instruction, e.g. say name, make eye contact, touch
- b. **Sustain** attention- give clear expectations to the child so he knows the aim, e.g. framework on board
- c. **Refocus** attention on the most important information
- d. Use a variety of input modes, e.g. visual (pictures, posters, cartoons, key words, colour coding, gesture); kinaesthetic (movement, role play), smell, taste (when possible!), rhythm, music
- e. **Use flowcharts** to help the child remember each part of an instruction and therefore complete tasks more independently
- f. We remember **bizarre** or **outstanding** things – try to think how you could use this when teaching (e.g. dress up!)
- g. Encourage the child to **repeat** an instruction to a peer
- h. **Motivation** - reward at the end of the session; keep reminding during the session, e.g. Game/Quiz at end

B. Retention

- a. Modify your language:
 - i. **repeat** important phrases, information, words
 - ii. **“chunk”** language, i.e. short phrases with gaps
 - iii. speak **slowly**
 - iv. **avoid** unnecessarily complex sentences
 - v. **avoid** idiomatic language and sarcasm. If you use these explain what you really mean (e.g. *“Hold your horses!”*)
- b. Introduce new words/concepts gradually, check understanding **before** putting in a teaching context
- c. Revise and recall after each “break”, e.g. What was liked/disliked, summarising, word definition (quiz) especially at the beginning of lessons
- d. Focus on key words: check and explain **meaning** by giving the “group” it belongs to and a simple example, e.g. ‘frustrated’ – it’s a feeling, a bit like cross, when you can’t do something – like *“I felt frustrated when I couldn’t play football.”*
- e. Also focus on the **sound structure** of a new word, i.e. what sound it begins with, how many syllables, rhyming words
- f. **Primacy/Recency effect** : we remember things taught first and last most easily, therefore have exciting / outstanding feature of the lesson in the middle of the lesson and have **learning breaks**

- g. Organise information given to the child in a **hierarchy**, i.e. start with **easy and familiar** then progress to **difficult and unfamiliar**

C. Retrieval

- a. If the child cannot retrieve specific words try to accept his explanation which demonstrates understanding
- b. Use a variety of recall modes: spoken, written, pictures
- c. Allow time for the child to use his strategies (count to 10 before expecting a response)

Encourage the child to use his strategies

Activities to develop Auditory Memory

A. Copying Sounds

You will need two sets of objects that make a sound, for example, rice in an empty margarine tub, two spoons to bang together, a wooden spoon to bang in a saucepan, two empty crisp bags to rustle together, ... etc.

Note If the child has musical instruments, use these instead.

Give the child one set of sound makers and keep the other for yourself. Position your sound makers so that the child can't see them, for example, behind a cardboard box.

Play one of your sound makers and see if the child can find his same one and make the sound. If the child can't find it, play yours again and give him a clue.

If the child finds this very easy, make two sounds, one after the other. Can the child find both of the sound makers and play them back to you in the correct order?

Gradually build up the number of sounds you make.

B. Actions

This is a "Simon Says ..." type of game. It is a good idea to make a list of actions that the child can do, as it is sometimes difficult to keep thinking of new things while you are playing the game; for example :

"close your eyes"

"clap your hands"

"stand up"

"stamp your feet"

"wave your hand"

"sit down"

"... etc."

Begin by asking the child to do one thing. If he can, then ask him to do two things; for example:

"wave your hand and close your eyes"

Stress that he must do one **then** the other, and in the order that you said them.

Increase the number of instructions when the child is ready for more.

C. Shopping (1)

Pictures of food or real food items can be used for this game. It will be more fun if you also have a shopping bag, purse and some money.

Ask the child to fetch you something from the "shop". Just ask for one item to begin with.

Once he has the idea of the game, ask for two food items; for example: *"cake and bread."* If the child can remember two items, ask him to give you them in the correct order; for example: *"bread then cake."*

If the child is successful, then ask for three items, and so on.

D. Shopping (2)

This game encourages the child to listen, remember and repeat what you have said (without any toys or objects to remind him).

Introduce the game by saying:

"I went shopping and bought" and say the name of something, such as: *"eggs"*.

The child then has to remember what you bought and add something of his own, for example: *"eggs and milk"*

You then repeat the items and add one of your own; for example: *"eggs, milk and meat"*, and so on.

E. I went to ...

This is a similar game to the second shopping activity. Begin by stating the name of the place you have been to, for example:

"I went to the zoo and saw ..."

Say an animal and then gradually increase the number; for example:

"I went to the zoo and saw an elephant"

"... .. and saw an elephant and a lion."

"... .. and saw an elephant, a lion and a tiger."

"... etc."

Other ideas of places to go are :

nursery / school

the farm

on holiday

Try to use a place that the child is familiar with.

F. Find the Toys

Choose a selection of toys and place them, within sight, around the room; for example:

"ball, car, teddy, doll, book, ... etc."

Ask the child to fetch one of these toys for you. If he can do this, gradually increase the number of toys that the child has to remember.

G. Drawing Game

You will need to divide a table in half with a screen (books or a cardboard box).

Seat the child on one side of the screen with yourself on the other, each having to hand paper and crayons or pencils.

Take it in turns to tell each other what to draw; for example :

"Draw a house"

"Put a red door on it"

“Draw three windows”

“... etc.”

Gradually increase the length of the instruction that you give to the child.

H. Grandmother’s Steps

This is an activity for a group of children to play.

One person is “grandmother” (it is usually a good idea if you take this role the first time the game is played.)

The children stand in a line around and at the same distance away from “grandmother” and take it in turns to ask “her” if they can move closer. “Grandmother” replies by giving instructions such as :

“Take one big step and two tiny steps”

“Take three steps forward and one back”

The children must remember the instructions they have been given and carry them out carefully.

The winner is the first child to be able to touch “grandmother”.

I. Colour Towers

You will need two sets of five different coloured bricks, one set for you and the other for the child. Use a large book or cardboard box as a screen so that neither can see the other’s bricks.

Tell the child what colour bricks you are using as you make a tower on your side of the screen; for example :

“red, blue, yellow, blue, ... etc.”

The child has to listen to and remember your instructions so that he can build a tower to match yours, remembering the colours in the correct order as the tower is built.

Once the child has built the tower, take the screen away and compare the two towers.

Note Another way to play this game is to use cardboard tubes standing on the table.

Say the colours of the bricks as you post them down the tube and then let the child do the same.

When the child has finished, lift the tube and compare the result.

J. “I went to market ...”, type of games

Play games such as “I went to market and I bought ...”.

Make the game more complex by adding in details, for example :

“1 dozen brown eggs, 2 litre bottles of coke”

Either take it in turns to draw what was said or let the child draw them.

Once drawn, turn the card over. When recalling what is said, point to the card but only turn it over if the child can’t remember what is on it. At the end, can you go through them all without turning them over?

Talk about the strategies the child used to remember and encourage the use of them in other games.

K. Making signposts

For example, saying how much information or how many items must be remembered, for example:

“I want you to go upstairs and get three things ..., ... and ...”

Ask the child to repeat them to you and then go and get them.

You can practise this in:

- Taking messages
 - Getting items
 - Recalling what other people have done, for example, at meal time everyone say three things they have done, then get another person to say what they have just said.
- As the child gets good at this increase the number of items.

L. Messages

Play in a small group.

Teacher and one child stay in the classroom, the others wait outside (with an assistant if necessary).

The teacher gives the child a message, for example:

“Please buy 3 currant buns, 2 doughnuts and a pint of milk.”

The child calls in one other child and relays the message.

The second child calls in the next and relays the message, and so on.

The last child relays the message to the first, who says whether it has been changed.

Skills Listening

Auditory memory

Sequencing

Giving accurate information

M. Variation on “Messages”

Mime a message or everyday scene, for example, washing up. The last person guesses what the messages was and checks with the first person whether he was correct.

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

Children need to develop skills of concentration, sequencing, memory and self-awareness in order to be able to develop their organisational skills.

General Strategies

Working Space

Help child to work in an uncluttered area.

Use a clear plastic pencil case to aid easy location of pens / pencils etc

Get child into the habit of having a place for everything: after an item is used, make sure the child puts it back where it belongs so that s/he knows where to find it next time.

Schoolwork

With younger children:-

Reinforce regular routines, prompt child to tell you what's next

Use a simple, visual timetable; colour code days or activities (this can be replicated at home)

Put pictures on school books to indicate the subject. For easy location, pictures could also be put on the trays/drawers where the books are kept (if all in one place).

Consider a 'home/school' book to help keep track of child's activities

With older children:-

Especially in preparation for secondary school, the child should be involved in deciding what strategies may be helpful. A useful source of further strategies is 'Occupational Therapy Approaches for Secondary Special Needs' (see Resource List).

Use a different coloured exercise book for each class and coloured folders to match the exercise books. Keep all papers and homework for a class in the matching folder, so that the child always knows where it is.

Where tools/apparatus are kept out of sight, mark cupboards/drawers with labels.

If using just one notebook / ring binder file, use tabbed dividers for each class/subject with a different colour for each.

Keep pens, pencils, pencil grips, erasers, a small ruler and other things needed for each class in separate (colour-coded) zipped, plastic pockets

Keep a supply of post-it notes in each file to write brief notes and stick on to provide cues for follow-up work.

Keep a memo book to write down important things.

Encourage child to make lists or action plans to help remember things and keep track of what needs to be done (cross off list when completed).

The same technique could be applied to completing a task / project i.e. tick off each step as it is achieved.

Try mind mapping approaches.

Put a copy of the school timetable in the notebook / ring binder file for reference (can be colour coded to match subject lessons).

Use timers to provide visual cues about the length of an activity which can help maintain attention

Use verbal cues and supports.

Make sure that you have the child's attention before giving an instruction. Say the child's name and make sure that they are looking at you.

Focus the children by telling them 'It's time to listen'

Highlight what you want them to listen out for, e.g. "At the end I want you to tell me three things about elephants" or "I want you to touch your nose every time I say 'Goldilocks'".

Encourage the pupil to repeat the instruction back to you before they start a task

Homework and preparing for school

Make a 'master' timetable that shows the usual weekly schedule, e.g. lessons, homework, after school activities.

Put the timetable in a plastic wallet to keep it clean, or get it laminated.

Provide a wall calendar with large blank spaces on which child can write important dates or events e.g. exams, when projects are due in. Use a pencil in case need to make changes. (Check dates with school).

Use a 'plan' book to keep track of daily homework assignments.

The plan book will also help with tracking assignments that are due later in the week or month.

Teachers and parents discuss a routine to prevent child losing things and rushing e.g. place all school items in the same place every day - perhaps a large box by the front door at home

A Checklist attached to their school bag or by the front door might help.

If child has trouble writing down homework assignments, check to make sure that what is written is accurate (can also ask a classmate to do this or provide a typed/written slip):-

Date:			
Subject	Is there homework?	What is it?	When is it due?
Numeracy	Yes / No		
Literacy	Yes / No		
Science	Yes / No		
History	Yes / No		

Activities to develop skills in Following Instructions

1. Traffic Lights

Let the children run around freely. When you shout :

“red” the children must stop,

“amber” they must sit down,

“green” they must resume their running.

2. “Who Can Go?”

At the “dismissal” times of the day, the children must listen to an instruction and be able to fit the requirement before acting. For example, the children are lined up, waiting to get their coats for playtime and the teacher says :

“Anyone wearing blue may put their coat on”.

3. “I Spy ...”

Play “I Spy ...” using descriptions of objects, instead of first sounds of the word. For example :

“I spy with my little eye, something that we sit on.” “I spy with my little eye, something that is under the window.”

This can concentrate on different aspects of language on different occasions or depending on the children’s needs, for example : verbs, adjectives, prepositions, functions, etc.

4. “Simon Says ...”

Play this game, firstly so that the children respond to all your commands, but, later, so they have to discriminate between responding to :

“Simon says touch your toes.”

and not responding when you say :

“Touch your toes.”

5. Listening Story

Ask the children to draw a “listening story”, so that they listen to your instructions to complete a drawing : for example :

“Draw a big circle in the middle of your page. ... Colour it pink.”

6. “Who Am I?”

Think of a person/character you and the children all know and describe him or her, with one piece of information at a time. Let the children guess who it is, for example :

"I'm thinking of an animal ... He has very big, floppy ears ... He is grey, with a bit of pink ... He can use his ears to fly ..." (Dumbo)

7. Riddles

Make up some riddles for the children to solve, for example :

"I gallop, I trot, my hooves go clip, clop. ... Who am I?"

"I am green. I grow in gardens and parks. ... You cut me with a lawnmower ... What am I?"

8. Story Noises

When reading a story, ask the children to make some response every time they hear a character name.

9. Silly Sentences

Start a sentence, for example :

"I saw a cow sitting ..."

Ask the children to take it in turns to finish the sentence :

"... in the middle of our kitchen. She was eating ... a piece of apple pie."

The children can later be encouraged to repeat the first part of the story before adding their own contribution.

10. Nursery Rhymes

One child starts off and another finishes a well-known nursery rhyme.

11. Nursery Rhymes

Read or recite nursery rhymes to the children. When they are familiar with one, recite it again, but miss out the last rhyming word of a line and encourage the children to help you fill in the missing word.

Later you can miss out several words at the end of a rhyming line, and then try missing a word from a non-rhyming line.

Eventually, when reading a well-known story, replace a word with its opposite and see if the children can correct you. (Most children find "mistakes" quite hilarious, and are very proud of their ability to catch you out!)

12. How do we look

Seat the group in a circle. The leader describes a situation and asks members to adopt an appropriate posture to sit – listening to music, cheering football, etc.

Classroom discussion can then take place around posture, facial expression and gesture.

13. Draw a Picture

Give the child an outline of a picture to colour in. Give him simple instructions such as to colour in the nose, hair, etc. He is only allowed to colour in one part at a time. Get him used to words such as "wait" and "go".

You could make this into a barrier game where you have a picture with different parts coloured in.

Give the child instructions on what to colour in, for example :

“Colour the hat red”

When he has completed each stage, let him check his work against your drawing.

14. Draw A House

Work in pairs. One member instructs his partner to draw a house. The person drawing should do exactly what his partner says.

Classroom discussion can focus on giving and receiving verbal instructions.

15. “What am I thinking of?”

Gradually build up a verbal picture of an object. Start with three clues. Can the child guess after two clues, three clues, etc. For example :

a) *“four feet, fur”* discuss that it could be any furry animal,

b) *“whiskers”* cat / lion

c) *“drinks milk and is a pet”* cat.

16. The Microphone

The group sits in a circle. Members discuss a topic, e.g. TV, pets, holidays. You can only talk if you are holding the magic microphone.

Discuss turn taking with the group.

17. Listen and Jump

In a group, the child has to listen for his name. When he hears it he has to jump into the circle.

The leader then prompts :

“What was Fiona’s favourite [food | pet | ...]?”

18. Favourites

Everyone says their favourite for a list of items, e.g. food, pet, TV programme, etc.

19. Shakers

Fill shakers (using “Pringles” packets, cardboard boxes or jars) with different sound makers (such as beads, dried peas, Ping-Pong ball, keys, etc).

Shake two that are the same, letting the child listen. Then shake two that are different. See if he can tell you whether the sounds he hears are the same or different. If he is having difficulty telling you, try introducing symbols or signs for “same” and “different” and encouraging him to point to the appropriate one.

You could have three shakers at a time, with two the same, see if the child can identify the two that sound the same.

Similarly you could shake one and give the child two to shake. See if he can show you which one sounds the same as yours.

20. Other Activities

Build simple “junk models”.

Provide the child with objects of different size, shape and colour. Tell the child what to do step by step. For example :

“Pick up four toilet rolls and stick them on the red box.”

Give instructions by oral direction for activities that can be done with pencil and paper. For example :

“Write your name on the back of the paper. Put a cross in one corner of the paper. ...”

This can be made increasingly difficult by introducing different colours, etc.

Negatives

A game for the whole class - for example :

“Please, Mr Crocodile, may we cross your river?”

“Only those not wearing a [dress | shoes | ... etc].”

Variations of “Simon says” - for example :

“Simon says ‘don’t touch your nose”

It is good to help a child to be as independent as possible by giving them strategies for informing the speaker **why** they didn’t follow a question or instruction. Have a set of [instructions | statements] that are :

too long

“Go and get your reading book out of the yellow bag in the library. It’s next to the little desk by the window. Then can you go and see Mr ____ and tell him “_____””

too complex

“Have you hurt your patella (knee)?”

too jumbled

“Erm, ... can you get me the red car? No, erm, I’ve changed my mind – can you get me the blue car?”

too short

“Can you get me the blue one.”

...etc.

Sequencing



Sequencing

Why are these skills important?

Sequencing involves putting steps in the right order to explain an activity or to tell a story. Being able to sequence allows children to express ideas clearly and is an essential part of social language.

Children with poor sequencing skills may:

- have poor organisational skills
- have difficulty in remembering the order of familiar activities
- have difficulties in remembering how to approach an activity
- have difficulties remembering time concepts
- may have difficulties in retelling stories in the right order



Activities to develop sequencing skills

- Talk about common sequences during classroom activities e.g. days of the week and months of the year
- Talk about everyday routines e.g. getting ready for bed using pictures to support.
Talk about what would happen if things were done in a different order e.g. putting pyjamas on then having a bath
- Teach concepts such as, *next*, *after*, *before*, *then*, *first*, *last*, *middle* as these support sequencing.
Play 'Simon says' type games using these words e.g. '*First* clap your hands, *then* stand up' and then use the same language in the classroom: e.g. '*First* put your books away *then* sit on the carpet'.
- In literacy and when writing stories, provide pictures with prompts to remind the children to think about what happened first, next and last.
- In news time encourage the children to use first, next and last to explain what happened. After story time ask the children what happened first, next and last in the story



SEQUENCING

Strategies to develop Sequencing of Language

Plan, Do and Review

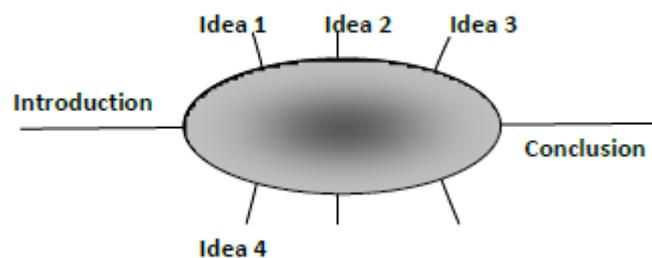
Help the child with a task | activity by encouraging him to :

Talk about what you are going to do, your aims, the resources you need, ... etc.

Whilst carrying out the activity, name the resource and describe what the child is doing, going to do next, ... etc., in short sentences.

After the activity is completed, encourage the child to think and talk about what he has done. Help him to structure this by using words like *"first ..."*, *"then ..."*, *"last ..."*.

Spidergrams (Mind maps)



Spidergrams are a useful method for planning a story, experiment, and essay and for reviewing and summarising work.

It is useful for a child with language difficulties because it encourages the child to plan more visually. Memory recall is assisted, sequential organisation is supported and maintenance of a topic is made easier.

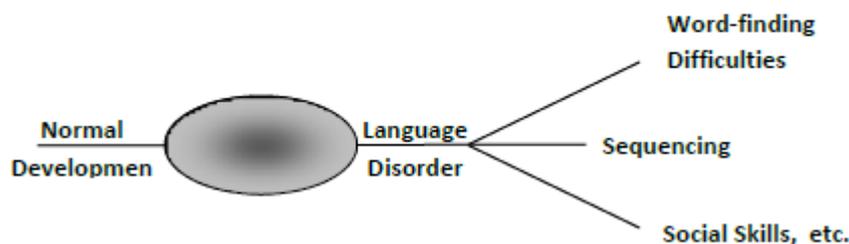
Example - A Story Plan

The story title must be in the body of the spider and referred to constantly. Each leg represents a paragraph or section of the story. Key words, pictures, symbols should be noted on the legs, in order, during the child's brainstorming. The use of different colours is also helpful. As the story is transferred to paper, computer, ... etc, the legs can be cut off, crossed out, ... etc.

Mind Maps

The same principle can be used to give an overview or summary of things taught, for example, a review of a topic covered over the week. This method is called a mind map (Tony Buzan).

Example



Activities to develop Sequencing, Retelling and Explaining

Early Stage

The first stage is being able to order pictures into a story by being shown the pictures one at a time, and being able to predict what will happen next.

Cut story strips up into individual pictures. Talk about each picture and ask what might happen next. If the child doesn't know or says something that is unusual or unexpected; for example:

a boy peeling a banana – what will happen next? *“play football”*

give him some alternatives, e.g. *“Will he eat the banana or throw it away?”*

You can also encourage these skills when reading a story and talking about what will happen next.

Talk about what you are going to do next during everyday routines. Sometimes you could draw a story of something that you have done during the day – see if the child can put the pictures in the right order and tell you what happened.

Retelling and explaining are important features of human communication. They enable us to share experience and pass on information when removed from the actual event.

At their highest level, these tasks are dependent upon:

- a) Remembering the episode
- b) Thinking of ideas
- c) Being aware of the listener's prior state of knowledge
- d) Having an adequate vocabulary and ability to recall words
- e) Being able to put words into sentences
- f) Sequencing sentences and ideas to form a logical structure (that is, beginning, middle and end)
- g) Being precise
- h) Adjusting your language to suit the listener

- i) Checking your listener is understanding
- j) Having the ability to keep the interest of your audience (using, for example, facial expression, gesture, body language, different voices and accents).
- k) Acknowledging the value of environmental props.

Retelling

1. Recalling and retelling of events that happened earlier in the day, or the day before, for example, outings, visits, special assemblies, etc.
The use of photographs to help recall past outings, plays, etc. is useful. The children can be helped by someone asking questions.
2. Watching a video and retelling the story.
You could try stopping the action on a second run through and asking the child to tell you what happened just before.
3. Use of classroom story books.
Short stories that are read by individuals could then be retold to the other members of the group. The child could use the pictures in the book to help recall the story.
4. Picture sequencing.
Either published material (LDA, etc.) can be used, or you can draw a story sequence with the child, as you tell the story. Cut it up for him to order and retell the story.
Make the language simple at first and then go on to use longer utterances and more detailed descriptions of the picture. Eventually use language that is imaginative and also abstract to link the pictures.
5. Using a “Magnetic Way to Language” act out a story telling it as you move the people, etc. around the board.
Encourage the child to:
 - tell your story to another adult or child who has not heard it before.
 - using the board to make up a story and have the child act out the story for you.
6. Use sound lotto stories.
Listen to the story and link the sounds heard to the pictures.
When the story is over, use the picture boards to help recall what has happened.
Listen to the story again to check if the answer was right. Make mistakes occasionally.
Can the child you are working with spot errors and tell you the correct sequence?
7. “Chinese story”.
Make up a story and use a tape recorder to record it.
Play it to one child who then has to make his own tape retelling the original story.
The next child listens to the first child’s story and retells it.
Continue until everyone in the group has had a turn.
Listen to the stories from the beginning.
The children can talk about what they missed out or got wrong on their retelling.

Explaining

In all of these activities, it would be useful for you to demonstrate how to explain things first.

1. The child can behave as a teacher explaining to the class | group how to do something he has done before, for example, laying a table.

2. The child has a picture of a model which he keeps secret. He explains to another child or a small group how to make it using the materials available.

At the end of the session, the children compare the picture and model and discuss where they have gone wrong (or got it right!).

3. As above using Lego or other building bricks.

4. Working behind a screen, the child explains to another child how to make or draw something that is in front of him.

5. The child can explain to someone else how to carry out a simple daily task, for example, making a cup of tea.

He can be helped by using resources (including a teapot, cups and saucers, etc.) as suggested to him by you.

6. The child can be asked to explain how to do something, for example, how to get to the hall, to a younger child.

7. Using science activities (for example: cooking, broad bean growth, etc.) the child can explain to others how to do an activity or what happened after it is completed.

8. Using a large scale map, the child can explain how to get to a specified place; for example:

"We are outside the library - tell me how to get to the cinema."

Extending Sequencing Activities

Use a set of pictures for the following activities that make up a story sequence. You can use as many pictures as you feel the child is able to cope with. Preferably start with three picture sequences, gradually building up the demands of the task.

The pictures can depict any story you like, e.g. a boy getting up, having his breakfast and then going to school, or a balloon slowly being blown up and then popping, etc.

Mix up the pictures and ask the child to put them in the right order to tell the story.

Note the order the child puts the pictures in and whether they are using left-right orientation.

Ask the child to tell the story, noting vocabulary used along with the grammatical structures employed.

Ask what might happen next – this targets prediction skills.

Ask the child “wh” questions, for example: who / what / where / why.

Ask the child how they know something, for example:

“How do you know he is scared?”

Similarly ask how they would feel in that situation – this targets the child’s ability to recognise and understand emotions and to empathise.

Ask the child to demonstrate understanding of language concepts, for example: first / last, before / after.

Ask the child to give a title for the story.

This shows an understanding of the “big picture”.

Resources

Helen Rippon (1996) *Black Sheep Press Sequencing Pictures*, Tel 01507 358 669