



Recipe for good listening

This activity teaches good listening by breaking it down into three key behaviours. This approach provides you with a simple way to recognise and praise good listening behaviour.

The main idea

Good listening involves three key behaviours:

1. Sitting still
2. Looking at the person who is speaking
3. Thinking about what the other person has said

What you do

Explain each behaviour separately and link it to good listening.

Praise each behaviour when you see it, again linking it to good listening. For example: *'You were sitting beautifully and that means you can listen better.'*

The more firmly embedded this idea is in the child's mind, the better.



'Look how good I am at listening. Now I know what to do.'

Have fun with role play

Have some fun demonstrating both poor and good listening.

1. Sitting still

Ask a child to tell you something – e.g. the best bit of their last holiday. Warn them that when they are talking, you might listen carefully or you might not.

When they are talking, wriggle around and look all over the place. Don't listen! You won't need to do this for very long.

Ask the children:

- *'Was I listening?'*
- *'How do you know I wasn't listening?'*
- *'What do I need to do to listen properly?'*

Usually, children come up with the idea of being still or looking at the speaker.

Go through this exercise again, this time listening well. Say to the children: *'I am sitting nicely so I am doing good listening.'* Use every opportunity that day to 'catch' children sitting nicely and listening. Praise them. For example: *'Look at you sitting so nicely and doing really good listening.'*

2. Looking

The next day (or when the children are ready) go through the same process, demonstrating both good and poor 'looking'.

3. Thinking

On the third day, go through the process again, this time with 'thinking'. Ask the children to talk to you. Make it obvious that you are not thinking about what is being said to you. For instance, stare blankly into space. Get the children to ask you questions. Explain that you don't know the answers because you weren't thinking.

Ask the children to tell you something else. This time, demonstrate good thinking and answer all the questions correctly.

Praise works wonders

Now that you and the children know exactly what good listening involves, you can make your praise very specific. For example: *'You knew the answer because you were doing good thinking and good listening.'* This is very powerful as it tells children exactly what they are doing well.

This activity is demonstrated on the DVD.

Reminder

Remember to follow the good listening rules when talking with children. You will find they get very good at telling you when you're not doing it right!