

SUPPORTING ATTENTION AND LISTENING SKILLS

The most important thing to support children with their attention and listening is to manage the environment so that there are fewer things to distract them. The following tips may help:

- When you can, limit background noise. If you are playing, turn off the television and radio so that the only voice children are listening to is your voice.
- Manage toys so that there are not too many out at one time. The more toys children can see, the more they are tempted to flit from toy to toy.
- Organise toys into boxes and put some out of sight/out of reach. Let your child play with one box at a time. If your child then wants to move on, help them to put the toys away in the box, put that away and then get another box out.
- Sitting at a table and chair can help children focus on more structured activities such as puzzles. Stay at this activity for as long as your child enjoys it, encouraging them to have one last go before moving on to something else.
- Teaching 'finish' as the time that you move on can help concentration. Begin with activities that have a clear end point such as shape sorters, puzzles, etc. Help your child to finish the activity, and say 'finished' before you move onto another activity.
- It can help to maintain your child's attention if you help them to almost complete an activity and then give them the satisfaction of finishing it. You could, for instance, encourage your child to put in the last piece of a puzzle, then the last two pieces, then the last three, and so on.
- Turn-taking games such as rolling a ball or building a tower can also be very helpful. When you sense that your child is getting bored, encourage them to have one more turn, so that you are gradually extending their attention and listening, and so that you can control when the activity is finished.



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- 🚩 Play with toys such as play-dough by gradually adding a new activity - let your child play with the dough without tools, then add just one utensil, eg a rolling pin, next add a plate and finally the cutters.
- 🚩 Make it slightly harder for your child to get up and move away until you have finished, ie by sitting with them or playing in a space that you can readily support them to stay in.
- 🚩 Remember to have realistic expectations; if your child can sit and do a puzzle for one minute, it might be possible to first extend this to two minutes, then three minutes and so on, rather than 10 minutes in one step. Keep positive and you will get there in stages.
- 🚩 Keep the activities fun and build up anticipation, as this will help keep your child's interest.