

Improving Child Listening Skills

HOW DO I GET MY CHILD TO LISTEN?? IMPROVING CHILD LISTENING SKILLS Listening is such an important social skill for everyone, children and adults alike. Giving our children a head start with listening skills will help them in so many ways and also make our own lives as parents easier in the long run. It can be frustrating and result in stress on both sides if a small child seems to ignore you when you need him or her to pay attention and listen to you. Improving child listening skills can be done in so many ways; here are some fun ideas for building listening skills during a normal family day. You probably already read to your child most days. Maybe you haven't thought about what a great thing this is for helping to improve your child's listening skills. If you talk with your child briefly about the story once you have finished, you will probably find that he was listening very well, even if he seemed distracted at times as you were reading. If so, you can take the opportunity to compliment him on listening well. Talk to your child about what 'active listening' is, and demonstrate it to her so she understands the concept. For instance, ask her about her day at nursery and use the following as you listen to her:

- a. Eye contact
- b. Feedback - repeating key points back to her when she pauses
- c. Nodding and making encouraging noises like 'uh-huh'

Explain to her what you were doing. Then ask her to practise listening actively to you as you tell her something interesting about your day, and praise her when she manages to use the techniques you just taught her. What about the frustrating days when it seems like your child won't listen to anything you say? If you've never talked to your child about listening skills, then it probably won't mean much to him if you ask him to 'listen to me!' But once you've practised the suggestions above a few times, then your child will understand much better and be more likely to respond positively and with improved behavior if you take him calmly to one side and explain that you are having a busy day and please would he listen to you carefully just now.

Improving child listening skills - more advanced ideas

Once your child has mastered the basic listening skills, or if you have an older child, consider getting your child to listen to you even better with some of these ideas:

- Asking questions. Show your child how when you are listening actively to her you will wait until she pauses, then prompt her to tell you more by asking a brief question. Get your child to practise this on you. Tell her something about your day (preferably something that will interest her!) but instead of telling her it all, pause and give her the opportunity to prompt you with a question like 'what happened next?' or 'how did that feel?'
- Understanding taking turns. Instead of telling your child off for interrupting, explain why it is more polite to listen properly - and help him to learn the skill of finding natural pauses in conversation before speaking
- And finally of course take pride in setting a great example by being a great listener yourself!

By using these ideas and remembering that kids won't necessarily know what 'listening' really means unless you teach them, you can improve your child's listening skills and reap the added benefit of improving YOUR listening skills too.

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