



How to help your child to listen

Many parents say they wish their child would listen to them! Understanding the world from your child's point of view and having realistic expectations can save a lot of parent stress!

Are you a good listener? What does good listening look like? How do you know if someone has listened to you?

Research tells us good listening means we are engaged, focused and interested in what other's say. Listening is a learned skill, and your child's developmental stage is a big factor in learning to listen.

Tips to support good listening skills:

- One of the best ways to encourage good listening is to be a good listener yourself
- Chat to your child and have conversations no matter what age they are
- Read to them often and describe the world around you
- Ask them questions about everyday things
- Notice and describe things in detail to your child in your everyday life
- Avoid swearing or other inappropriate language
- Sing and rhyme with your child

What are some barriers to listening?

- Age and development
- fear, anxiety or confusion
- distractions (screens, noisy environments)
- thirst or hunger (the 'hangries')
- timing – what is your child doing when you are talking?
- lack of understanding meanings of words
- medical issues such as hearing or vision impairment
- neurological disorders like autism spectrum, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or Foetal Alcohol Syndrome disorder

Did you know some foods and drinks can make concentrating very difficult for your child? Foods high in sugar and salt, foods with artificial flavours and colours and highly processed foods often affect children's behaviour.

What you can do:

- be age-appropriate and realistic with your listening expectations
- make eye contact
- avoid distractions – pick your moment for important messages
- be direct with your message – say what you mean
- use words your child easily understands
- use as few words as possible; avoid long explanations
- check for understanding
- model being a good listener yourself
- avoid highly processed or sugary foods and drinks

