

# Listening Games

(infant – 5yrs)

## 3



## Listening Games

Hearing nonspeech sounds is relatively easy and natural for people—provided that they pay attention. Therein lies the primary motive for these initial listening games: to introduce the children to the art of listening actively, attentively, and analytically.

The children are asked to listen to many everyday sounds, such as the rush of the wind, the hum of an air conditioner, and the snipping of scissors. With closed eyes, they are asked to identify the sounds, to remember their order, and to locate their sources. Once the nature of the game has been established, the children are given similar activities with meaningful language in place of environmental sounds. For example, they are asked to listen to poems and stories that are very familiar, except that, every now and then, the familiar wordings have been replaced with nonsense. In detecting such changes, the children are learning to listen—not for what they expect, but for what they actually hear. In this way, they are introduced to the art of listening actively, attentively, and analytically.

## 3A Listening to Sounds

**Objective** To allow children to explore their listening powers and to practice focusing their attention on particular sounds of interest

**Materials needed** Tape recording of various sounds (optional)  
Tape player (optional)

**Activity** Our world is filled with sounds. Through this game, the children will discover that, if they listen, they can hear sounds from outdoors, indoors, and even from within themselves. Before starting the game, talk about the difference between listening with closed eyes and with open eyes. Then ask the children to sit with closed eyes and just listen for a few moments. After a few minutes, invite them to name different sounds that they hear. The children will quickly learn to listen actively. Sounds that may be heard include the following:

birds	drips	rustling of treetops
breathing	fan	swallowing
cars	flies	trucks
clocks	footsteps	voices
dogs	heartbeat	wind blowing

**Variation**

- For variety or to extend the range of sounds that can be heard, repeat this game in a different location or using tape recordings.

### NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

## 3B



## Listening to Sequences of Sounds

**Objective**

To develop the memory and attentional abilities for thinking about sequences of sounds and the language for discussing them

**Materials needed**

Objects that make interesting, distinctive sounds. Some examples follow:

banging on wall/table/lap	opening window or drawer
blowing	pouring liquid
blowing a whistle	ringing a bell
blowing nose	rubbing hands together
clapping	scratching
clicking with tongue	sharpening a pencil
closing purse	slamming a book
coloring hard on paper	smashing crackers
coughing	snapping fingers
crumpling paper	stamping
cutting with a knife	stirring with teaspoon
cutting with scissors	tearing paper
dropping (various things)	tiptoeing
drumming with fingers	turning on computer
eating an apple	walking
folding paper	whistling
hammering	writing on board
hopping	writing with a pencil
noisy chewing	

**Activity**

In this game, the children are challenged first to identify single sounds and then to identify each one of a sequence of sounds. Both will be very important in the language games to come. The children are to cover their eyes with their hands while you make a familiar noise such as closing the door, sneezing, or playing a key on the piano. By listening carefully and without peeking, the children are to try to identify the noise.

Once the children have caught on to the game, make two noises, one after the other. Without peeking, the children are to guess the two sounds



in sequence saying, "There were two sounds. First we heard a \_\_\_\_\_, and then we heard a \_\_\_\_\_."

After the children have become quite good with pairs of noises, produce series of more than two for them to identify and report in sequence. Again, complete sentences should be encouraged.

Remember that, to give every child the opportunity to participate mentally in these games, it is important to discourage all children from calling out their answers until they are asked to do so. In addition, both to support full participation and to allow assessment of individual students, it is helpful to switch unpredictably between inviting a response from the whole group and from individual children of your designation.

*Note:* Because of the importance of the skill exercised through this game, invest special care in noting every child's progress and difficulties. Extra opportunities should be created to work with children who are having trouble with the concept of sequences or in expressing their responses.

### Variations

- With the children's eyes closed, make a series of sounds. Then repeat the sequence, but omit one of the sounds. The children must identify the sound that has been omitted from the second sequence.
- Invite the children to make sounds for their classmates to guess.
- These games also offer good opportunities to review, exercise, and evaluate children's use of ordinal terms such as first, second, third, middle, last. It is worth ensuring that every student gains comfortable, receptive, and expressive command of these terms.

### NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

## 3D



## Hiding the Alarm Clock

**Objective**

To locate a sound that, moment by moment, blends easily with the random noises in the environment—to successfully locate it, the children must develop and expand upon the ability to stretch their listening attention in time

**Materials needed**

Ticking clock or timer

**Activity**

Ask one of the children to cover her or his eyes. While the child's eyes are covered, hide a ticking clock or timer. The child then uncovers her or his eyes and tries to find the ticking clock by listening. During the search, all the other children must be as quiet as mice, trying not to give away any hints.

**NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

3F



## Whisper Your Name

**Objective**

For children to pick out one specific sound from many similar sounds that are heard at once

**Materials needed**

Blindfold

**Activity**

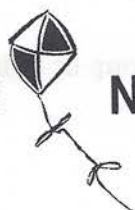
Take one child (the "listening child") and move to another part of the room where, together, you can secretly select the name of some other child in the classroom. Then blindfold the child.

Meanwhile, all of the other children are standing in a circle, whispering their own names. The "listening child" is guided around the circle by the adult, listening for the name that was selected. On hearing the selected name, the "listening child" embraces its speaker.

**NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**



3G



## Nonsense

### Objective

To develop the children's ability to attend to differences between what they expect to hear and what they actually hear

### Materials needed

Book of familiar stories or poems

### Activity

Invite the children to sit down and close their eyes so that they can concentrate on what they will hear. Then recite or read aloud a familiar story or poem to the children but, once in a while, by changing its words or wording, change its sense to nonsense. The children's challenge is to detect such changes whenever they occur. When they do, encourage them to explain what was wrong. As the game is replayed in more subtle variations across the year, it will also serve usefully to sharpen the children's awareness of the phonology, words, syntax, and semantics of language.

As illustrated in the following list, you can change any text in more or less subtle ways at a number of different levels including phonemes, words, grammar, and meaning. Because of this, the game can be profitably and enjoyably revisited again and again throughout the year. Even so, in initial plays of the game, it is important that the changes result in violations of the sense, meaning, and wording of the text that are relatively obvious. Following are some examples of the "nonsense" that can be created within familiar poems and rhymes:

Song a sing of sixpence  
Baa baa purple sheep  
Twinkle, twinkle little car  
Humpty Dumpty wall on a sat  
Jack fell down and crown his broke  
One, two, shuckle my boo  
I'm a little leapot  
The eensy weensy spider went up the  
spouter wat.  
One, two, buckle my shoe  
Five, six, pick up sticks

Reverse words  
Substitute words  
Substitute words  
Swap word order (ungrammatical)  
Swap word order (ungrammatical)  
Swap word parts  
Swap word parts  
  
Swap word parts  
  
Switch order of events (grammatical)



Little Miss Muffet, eating a tuffet  
 Sat on her curds and whey  
 Goldilocks went inside and knocked  
 on the door.  
 The first little piggy built himself a house  
 of bricks.

Switch order of events (grammatical)

Switch order of events (grammatical)

Switch order of events (grammatical)

**Note:** Don't forget to switch unpredictably between asking the whole group or individual children to respond.

## NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

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## Do You Remember?

**Objective**

To exercise children's ability to remember and execute actions in sequential steps and, more generally, to develop the kind of attentive listening that is necessary for understanding and following verbal instructions (both are extremely important abilities for the young student)

**Materials needed**

Picture cards (optional)

**Activity**

This is a game of sequential instructions. Instruct the child who is "it" to complete a series of actions (e.g., "Stand up, lift one leg, hop to the door, and say *bool*"). Meanwhile, the rest of the children are to listen and watch carefully, giving a thumbs-up or thumbs-down depending on whether the first child follows the instructions correctly (i.e., executes the correct actions in the correct order).

The first several times this game is played, the instructions should be kept relatively simple and short. With revisits and depending on the capabilities of the particular child who is "it," their length and syntactic complexity should be increased to maintain the appropriate level of challenge and instructional benefit. In particular, this game and its variations offer special opportunity for developing the children's awareness and understanding of prepositions and relational words such as *over*, *under*, *behind*, *before*, *after*, *in front of*, *middle*, *last*, *while*, *until*. Following are examples:

1. Easy: "Go to the table. Pick up the book."
2. Harder: "Crawl under the table. Stand up. Pick up three books. Smile."
3. Hard: "Stand on your right foot. Take four hops to the table. Pick up two books while you smile at Rosa."

*Note:* Observe the children carefully to determine who may need extra support and practice.

**Variations**

- Ask a child to give the instructions to another child. To increase involvement, you may wish to divide the children into groups of five or so.
- Early on or with younger children, it may be helpful to use action picture cards in addition to the oral directions.
- Once the children are comfortable with the basic game, playing Simon Says with the whole class can be a fun and powerful means of exercising and extending these sorts of language and listening skills.

**NOTES AND ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**