

## Attention and Listening Developmental Milestones

Age	Attention level	Effect on language	Strategies to develop and support attention and listening
Up to 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very distractible.</li> <li>• Attention is fleeting and given to the most exciting stimulus in the room.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can find it difficult to attend to what you are saying.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out what motivates your child and incorporate these into activities.</li> </ul>
Between 1 and 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can attend to an activity of their own choosing for a longer period of time but need to block out all other distractions.</li> <li>• Attention is described as rigid and inflexible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your child may block out what you are saying to concentrate on what they are doing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow them to finish what they are doing before gaining their attention.</li> <li>• Gain your child's attention first by using their name and/or touching them.</li> <li>• Sing songs with your child and leave out words for them to fill in.</li> </ul>
Between 2 and 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention is still single channelled but beginning to be able to attend to adults.</li> <li>• Beginning to switch attention between adults and task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to listen to adult instructions if the child stops what they are doing.</li> <li>• Adults need to ensure they have the child's attention before giving any instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure child is looking towards you when you are speaking to them.</li> <li>• Be specific; using the child's name to help focus their attention.</li> <li>• Play games so your child develops their ability to listen to and follow simple instructions, e.g. 'Simon Says', musical statues, ready, steady, go...</li> </ul>
Between 3 and 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention remains single channelled but child is more able to control their attention.</li> <li>• Child is able to switch between task and adult spontaneously.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will look at an adult when they speak.</li> <li>• Able to shift their attention from the task to the adult giving instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your child when it's time to listen.</li> <li>• Teach listening rules in nursery/school; sit still, look at the person speaking, think about the words and wait for your turn to speak.</li> <li>• Use gestures, pictures and objects to hold the child's attention. These also</li> </ul>



			<p>help them understand spoken information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break down long or complex instructions into shorter 'chunks' of information and repeat if necessary. Give the child time to process the instruction.</li> <li>• Gradually increase the amount of time children are expected to listen for.</li> </ul>
Between 4 and 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to integrate attention to multiple channels for short periods of time.</li> <li>• Can attend to verbal instructions without needing to look at the adult giving the instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can listen whilst also completing another activity such as playing or working.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praise good listening skills.</li> <li>• Teach listening rules in nursery/school; sit still, look at the person speaking, think about the words and wait for your turn to speak.</li> <li>• Use visuals to reinforce listening rules; posters in classrooms, symbols that can be given to children to remind them of rules.</li> </ul>
5+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained and integrated attention is well established and under the child's control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to listen and attend well in class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow processing time.</li> <li>• Simplify instructions into logical sequences and repeat keywords if necessary.</li> <li>• Encourage child to say if that haven't understood and ask for clarification or repetition.</li> </ul>

**Attention and listening skills are not present in 2 age categories below their actual age e.g. attention is rigid and inflexible at 3-4 years**

**Attention and listening skills are not present in 1 age category below their actual age e.g. beginning to switch between adult and task at 3-4 years**

**Attention and listening skills are age appropriate**

