

Listening & Attention Skills

Parent Advice Sheet – Age 5 - 6

At age 6, children are developing the ability to:

- Focus for 10–15 minutes
- Follow multi-step instructions
- Listen in group settings
- Tune out distractions

These skills are key for learning, friendships, and emotional growth.

Why Listening and Attention Matter

- **Language Development:** Listening is the gateway to understanding and using language. Children need to hear and process words to build vocabulary and sentence structure.
- **Following Instructions:** Classroom routines often involve multi-step directions. Good attention helps children stay focused and complete tasks correctly.
- **Social Interaction:** Listening to peers and teachers fosters empathy, turn-taking, and cooperation — all essential for building friendships and resolving conflicts.
- **Academic Success:** Whether it's story time, phonics, or maths games, attention is key to absorbing new concepts and participating meaningfully.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Focused listening helps children tune into their own feelings and those of others, which supports better behavior and self-control.

How It All Connects

Listening isn't just hearing — it's interpreting sounds, understanding meaning, and responding appropriately. Attention helps children filter out distractions and focus on what's important, whether it's a teacher's voice or a peer's idea during group work.

How Teachers Support These Skills

Teachers use games like “Simon Says,” storytelling, and interactive songs to build listening and attention gradually. Quiet environments, visual cues, and engaging activities also help children stay focused.

In short, these skills are the building blocks for everything else — from learning to read to making friends.

How You Can Help at Home

Create a Listening-Friendly Space

- Reduce background noise during tasks
- Use eye contact and gestures
- Speak clearly and simply

Model Good Listening

- Give your child full attention
- Repeat back what they say
- Praise good listening: “Great job waiting your turn!”

Break Instructions Into Steps

- Use short phrases: “First brush your teeth, then get dressed”
- Ask them to repeat instructions back

Use Timers & Routines

- Timers help with focus: “Let’s clean up for 5 minutes”
- Routines build predictability and attention

Fun Activities to Try

Activity	What to Do	Skills Practiced
Simon Says	Give silly commands—only follow “Simon says”	Listening, impulse control
Sound Hunt	Play sounds and guess what they are	Auditory discrimination

Story Sequencing	Read a story, then retell it in order	Memory, attention to detail
Target Toss	Toss beanbags with specific instructions	Focus, following directions
Freeze Dance	Dance to music—freeze when it stops	Attention shifting
Listening Detective	Give clues to find hidden objects	Listening for detail

Conversation Starters

- “What was your favourite part of today?”
- “Can you tell me three things from the story?”
- “Would you rather... and why?”

Quick Tips

- Keep activities short and varied
- Celebrate effort, not just success
- Be patient—attention improves with practice