

12 SUCCESSFUL LISTENING AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE STRATEGIES FOR LITTLE LISTENERS

Did you know as a parent that you are a brain builder? For your child with hearing loss, there are things you can do every day to help them learn to listen and talk. And as a brain builder, you need a special toolbox that would include 12 listening and spoken language strategies or LSL strategies.

As you embark on the listening and spoken language journey, or the LSL journey, you'll be equipped with a toolkit so you can turn everyday moments into listening and language learning moments. Let's talk about these 12 strategies so you can start using them in your family's everyday moments and routines so your child can become a great listener and talker.

I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway with Hearing First. We're here to help and support families just like yours who have a child with hearing loss. We want to empower you as your child learns to listen, talk, read, and thrive just like kids with typical hearing.

As I mentioned, there are 12 key LSL strategies you can use as you interact with your child to help them learn to listen and talk. We've named these strategies so they'll be easier to remember, but your LSL intervention professional may use different names. Whatever they're called, their purpose is the same, to help your child develop their listening, talking, thinking, and reading skills.

In this video, I will provide just a quick overview of all the 12 strategies, but if you'd like to get more specific information and learn more, we have those resources and videos for you, and you can click on the link below.

Be a Director. Be a director means you intentionally direct your child to listen. As a new listener, your child doesn't know what sound is yet or what is important that they need to be paying attention to or listening to. They need to learn and understand all the sounds around them so their brain can start making meaning of them. This strategy allows your child the opportunity to detect and pay attention to the sounds and the speech and the language around them and learn which ones are important.

Be a Bird Dog. To be a bird dog, that means you always point out sounds and name them. This strategy goes along with be a director. After you use, be a director or direct your child to listen, you'll go the next step further by naming the sound, imitating it, pausing, and to see how your baby reacts. Then label the sound and talk more about it. You're connecting the sound with a name and the language that describes it.

Hear It Before They See It. Hear it before they see it is when you let your child hear a sound, or a word, or a simple direction, or a song before you start showing them the object or the page or start the motions of the song. Providing ear contact before eye contact is critical to growing your child's auditory skills. Another name for this is audition first, and it will help their listen skills become as strong as their visual skills.

Make Listening Easier. When you control the listening environment and place emphasis on the sounds, words, and spoken language your child hears, you make listening easier. Help your child learn to listen by minimizing background noise, leaning in, moving closer, being a drama mama or dramatic daddy.

Play-By-Play. Much like a sports announcer gives a play-by-play of the action, you can use the play-by-play strategy to describe what your child is experiencing. This provides your child with the opportunity to hear lots of words, and just how many words do they need to hear in those early years? Research tells us that children who hear 40 million words in the first four years of life develop early conversation skills, learn to read on time, do better in school, and have more communication opportunities in the future. It's your turn.

It's Your Turn strategy is when you talk with your child and expect a response from them. The goal is to encourage your child to use their words and build their listening and language skills to become a great conversationalist. Use this strategy to teach your child the power of turn taking in conversations. It also helps your child further their spoken language and thinking skills, which are important for expressing their own thoughts and ideas. When you use this strategy and your child engages in the back and forth of conversation, it's also known as serve and return.

Create a Listening Sandwich. Create a listening sandwich by beginning and ending with audition only, just like two pieces of bread complete a sandwich. The middle part of the sandwich is any technique you use to promote your child's understanding of language or enhance their ability to hear the different sounds of speech in words or phrases.

By sandwiching the helpful technique between listening without any cues to help, you give your child multiple opportunities to hear and understand. This strategy, also called an auditory sandwich, can be used to promote your child's understanding of language and enhance their speech production.

Keep Them On Their Toes. When you keep things surprising or unexpected, you are using the keep them on their toes strategy. Use this strategy during daily routines, at playtime, or while sharing a story. It's a little bit of trickery and a lot of exaggeration, but it's all for language learning. Initiate a surprise within a routine so your child can practice requesting and questioning vocabulary, problem-solving, and using spoken language. Wait for your child to notice the unexpected and see what conversation follows. Keep them on their toes can also be known as sabotage.

Beyond The Here And Now. Beyond the here and now means that you will respond to your child's utterances by modeling more adult-like utterances, adding more words to what they say, or sharing new information to build on the topic. When you do this, you are teaching them new vocabulary words, how to talk in more complex sentences, and how to learn and think about new information. Here are three easy ways to use this strategy.

1. Model or demonstrate the complete sentence or question. This will help your child improve how they use sentences and ask questions.
2. Expand their vocabulary by using different words that mean the same thing.
3. Stimulate their thinking with comments or stories to provide new information to extend what they're talking about. Connecting the familiar with something less familiar helps your child learn about the world.

It's All about Me. When we say, it's all about me, what we really mean is your child. Use this strategy to make stories and playtime personal. Children love it when the subject of conversation is about them, and it gets their listening attention. Plus, it makes conversations more fun. You could use their own name or a family member's name in a song or a story.

You could also connect your child's past experiences to what they're playing in school or doing in school and what they're reading. This prompts their thinking, helps with memory, and allows them to practice talking about themselves and what they've done in the past.

Help Me But Don't Tell Me. Help me but don't tell me means you'll provide clues to give your child the opportunity to think and use their reasoning to grow their listening and language skills. Sometimes the best way to learn is by doing. Instead of telling them all the answers, give them clues to help them think and problem solve to discover the answer on their own.

For this strategy, you could provide different kinds of clues or information, like label the category, provide a rhyming word, suggest the opposite, or use a describing word. The goal is to promote your child's listening and thinking skills to help them connect pieces of information they know, which expands and enhances their knowledge of the world and of language.

What Did You Hear? The what did you hear strategy means you ask your child what they heard instead of immediately repeating what you said if they say, "Huh," or "What?" Encourage your child to become a better listener and grow confidence in their listening skills. If your child isn't sure of what was said or doesn't appear to understand, they may ask, "Huh," or "What?" to respond.

Reply and ask them, "What did you hear?" More often than not, your child has heard part of the message. By asking, you'll know what information needs to be repeated, and they may be able to determine what was said on their very own. Using this strategy encourages your child to take responsibility for their own listening by focusing on the first time something is said or asked. It also provides your child confidence in their listening abilities. You'll learn more about how they're hearing, and you can share that information with your LSL team.

I know, all 12 feels like a lot, but guess what? You're not expected to know how to do all of these on your own at the same time. Your LSL early interventionist will coach and guide you so that these become natural to you, and you'll find yourself creating listening and spoken language moments in all that you do with your child.

Click the link below to learn more about these 12 LSL strategies and how you can use them to help your child with hearing loss become an exceptional listener and conversationalist. We've got a great handout for you to download and use. Maybe place these on your refrigerator as a reminder to use these strategies in your daily life with your child.

Wherever you are on this journey and however you may be feeling, you are not alone. Hearing First is here to help you every step of the way. If you'd like to meet other families of children with hearing loss, you can join our private Facebook group or the Hearing First Family Support Community. Don't forget to subscribe to the YouTube channel for more helpful videos, and visit hearingfirst.org to find more resources and support on this journey.