

Explaining LSL Strategies: How to Be a Director and Bird Dog

Listen, I have great news for you. Did that get your attention?

If your baby is deaf or hard of hearing and you want them to listen and talk, listening and spoken language, or LSL, uses strategies based on research about what little brains need to learn to listen and talk.

These strategies align with child development milestones, and you'll learn them in early intervention, and I just used one of the two that you'll use early and often with your baby. I'll explain what they are, why they work, and how you can use them every day.

Hi, 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.

There are two strategies that are so important for new listeners, and you'll want to start using them with your baby right away. It's a good idea to start using these strategies immediately after your baby's hearing loss has been identified and remember, these strategies are for everyone in the family to be using. You can include other caregivers too, friends, neighbors, grandparents, everyone can get involved. Okay, so what are these amazing strategies?

Today we're going to talk about **Be a Director** and **Be a Bird Dog**. These two strategies work so well together, they are perfect for growing your baby's listening skills. Soon you won't even notice how often you use them because it will become natural to you and your family. Let's talk about each one and what it looks like.

Be a Director is when you intentionally direct your little one to listen. Point to your ear, to alert your child and say, "*Listen.*" Then pause so they can hear the sound. Or before talking to them, call their name and say, "*Listen. Olivia, listen*" And pause and wait for their attention before you start talking.

Be a Bird Dog is when you go a step further and point out sounds and name them, then label the sound and talk about it more. You're connecting the sound with the name and the language describing it.

Let's try them both together. First, direct your baby to listen, "*listen*" and pause. That's **Being a Director**. Then **Be a Bird Dog**. "*Listen, I hear that, I hear the music*" And point towards the sound. Then add a comment using a simple sentence. "*There's music playing outside. I hear it, I like that song.*"

These strategies seem pretty basic and simple, but your baby is a new listener, they don't know what sound is yet and what's important to listen to. Listening is a new skill, and they need practice and who better to teach them than you?

These strategies allow your child the opportunity to detect and pay attention to the sounds and speech around them and learn which ones are important. Over time, your baby will match the sounds they hear with the objects around them and will even start trying to imitate the sounds. That's a great indication that sound has meaning and their listening and talking skills are developing. Make sure you share with your early interventionist what you observe when you use these strategies.

If your baby is younger than a year or two after you name the sound, then imitate it. So, you could say, "Listen," then pause. *"I hear a dog. Woof, woof, that's the dog."* As your baby gets older, you'll change how you use this strategy, and your interventionist will guide you based upon your baby's progress.

With a toddler, they'll likely notice the sound and not need you to be a director as much, but you can still call attention to the sound and name them. Then build upon it and engage with your toddler. *"Listen, I hear a train, that's just like your favorite toy. Listen to the train. Oh, I wonder if the train conductor will blow the train whistle. Let's listen. What does the train sound like?"* And pause to let them make the sound. *"That's right, the train goes, woo, hoo, choo, choo."*

As they become older and reach those preschooler years, you can start to ask them questions to spark their interest and teach them more about the world around them. *"Wait, I hear something, listen, what is that?"* And let them listen and respond. *"Oh, I think you're right, it is a bird. The bird is chirping, let's listen. Where do you think that bird built her nest?"*

Remember, your little one is a brand new listener and they'll need your help to learn about all the sounds happening around them. These strategies are proven to help your child with hearing loss learn to listen and talk and there's more strategies and techniques that you can use with LSL and learn in early intervention. If you want to learn more about the LSL strategies and techniques, click the link below and discover all kinds of helpful information and free resources.

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. Subscribe to the YouTube channel for more helpful videos and visit hearingfirst.org to find more resources and support on this journey.