

HEAR IT BEFORE THEY SEE IT: A STRATEGY TO USE WITH LITTLE LISTENERS

A powerful and effective strategy to teach your child with hearing loss to become a great listener is Hear It Before You See It, or also known as Audition First. What does this mean? Well, it means ear contact before eye contact. Children are going to hear about the words or hear the song before the action starts happening or they actually see the object. In this video, you'll learn what it is, why it works, and how you can start using it right away especially with new listeners.

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.

The Hear It Before You See It strategy. Why does this work? Providing ear contact before eye contact is critical to growing your baby's auditory and listening skills. Babies do a lot of listening before they ever say their first words, and to help them become better listeners, especially when you have a hearing loss, you'll need to focus on building and growing those listening skills. This strategy is a great way to help your baby practice listening and using their ears to learn language every day. You can also teach it to others in your family so they can use it too.

So, what does Hear It Before They See It look like in practice? Well, when you're playing with your child, you may talk about the object before they see the object. If you have a daily routine such as getting ready for bed, you may describe the action before the action really begins to happen.

An example of how to use this strategy is with diaper changing. So perhaps it's time to change your baby's diaper. Well, before you start to go and pick up your baby or make movement towards your diaper bag, you might say, "Oh, your diaper, you're stinky, let's go change your diaper," before you actually start moving towards them or bending to pick them up or moving towards the changing table or wherever you're changing their diaper.

What you need to look for is is that baby start to squeal or crawl away from you fast to get away from you because they don't want to get their diaper changed? That would be a key observation for you to share with your support team. Why? Because it's telling us the language is now having meaning, and they're beginning to understand spoken language through their ears, which is a terrific auditory skill development milestone.

So, what does Hear It Before You See It look like when you're playing with toys? Well, first of all, you might hide the toy under a blanket or in a bag or out sight of the child, and you might say, "Listen, oh, I hear an airplane. Ah, I hear our airplane." Notice how I'm saying the name of the object and then making a sound, an early beginning sound or Learning to Listen sound that that object might make. And I might say, "Listen. Ah, I hear the airplane. It's an airplane. Ah." And then, I bring out my airplane. Now, toys

have to do something, don't they, or otherwise, they're kind of boring. So they need to have a play routine that goes with them.

So one of the things I might do with an airplane is I might say, "The airplane's going up, up, up." And I might be pausing to wait for that child to provide a vocalization to make the plane go up. And then listen, "Ah," and make the plane fly around. Again, I might pause at the top and listen and wait to see if the child vocalizes to make that airplane go down and see if they begin to imitate the sound, ah, that beginning vowel sound.

So how do you use Hear It Before They See It with a book? It means that you're opening the book, you're reading the book and sharing the book, but you talk about the page before they see it. So I might say, "Oh, you won't believe what the hungry caterpillar ate next. It's a big green leaf. Whoa! Look, he munched, munched, crunched, ate, gobbled on the green leaf. He was very, very hungry and his tummy was hurting, and now he feels better after he ate the green leaf."

So, notice how I talked about the page, the next page that was coming up, before I turned the page and showed it to the child. When you're using the Hear It Before They See It strategy, always observe how your baby or how your child is responding. Did they turn to the sound? Did they anticipate the sound? Did they anticipate the object or the movements? These would be all indicators that your child's listening skills and language skills are developing, and that words and sound and sentences are powerful.

So why is the strategy important and how does it help your child develop their listening and spoken language skills? Well, it's important because it starts enhancing their listening skills very early. It helps with their auditory awareness, their auditory attention. It begins to expose them to vocabulary, to meaningful language, during meaningful interactions with you. And it's the foundation of which they're going to be building their receptive language skills, meaning their understanding of language, their expressive language of how they're going to put words together to express their own thoughts and it is truly the beginning to get them off to a great start to be a great conversationalist. Click the link below to get more tips on how to turn everyday moments and routines with your baby into listening and learning opportunities.

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 also visit hearingfirst.org to find more resources and support on this journey.