

Expectations

There is no shortcut to improving listening and language skills. They cannot be acquired successfully solely by directly teaching skills out of context or by getting children to copy adult speech though specific sessions and imitation may play a part.

The most effective way to develop listening and spoken language skills is by practising them in many different kinds of conversations, which run alongside everything that happens during the day.

Expectations matter – do you expect deaf children to listen, or do you expect that they will always need some visual support or repetition and simplification?

If you ask them to watch, is it to maintain attention or because you believe that they need to lipread?

What are the implications of their listening skills on access to learning in the classroom? What happens if we always interpret for them – tell them in advance what the teacher will say / repeat it all for them afterwards? We should not be making sense of the world for them but helping them to acquire the skills they need to work it out for themselves. What do we expect of pupils and do we make that clear to them?

Making mistakes and acknowledging that we don't always understand can help deaf children and young people to learn; use of auditory feedback by expanding / recasting ensures you have understood and also provides a good acoustic and linguistic model; try to be precise when requesting repetition – more slowly / particular words. Mistakes are to be expected.

Professionals and families need to know what children can do and then expect a little bit more each time; break down the listening task into the required elements (what the child is actually having to do) and then break down each aspect of listening into small steps. These will gradually be built upon to improve listening skills

Phonological development: know what is expected for their stage – hearing children do not have a fully developed phonological system when they enter school; have high expectations but take account of the child's developmental profile; be clear what the next steps are and expect children to progress towards them.

Also consider how different it is in a classroom than holding a conversation. Equip the child to listen in different social and educational situations. Expect them to learn to cope with different listening situations.