

# Listen & Learn

Small group activity to develop attention and listening skills and to support children's social interaction

(Remember - you may have to introduce these activities 1:1)

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Every Child a Talker



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The activities contained in this booklet aim to support the development of various aspects of the Communication Chain (ECAT Training - Leicestershire).

This includes:

- Attention and Listening
- Non-Verbal Behaviour
- Receptive Language or Comprehension
- Expressive Language
- Speech and Gestures

Playing and having fun in an adult supported and structured session can also be a good way for children to experience and practice skills essential for successful social interaction

### These include:

- Waiting
- Anticipating
- Taking turns
- Sitting next to others
- Using names of others
- Making choices
- Joining in
- Coping with winning and losing
- Extending vocabulary

Ideally there should be up to four children, with a range of abilities in each group - you will need some role models but not children who will dominate the session (remember SCAN - ECAT training session 1)

You should plan to include children two or three times a week, for 10 to 15 minutes, if they attend your setting daily. Aim to include children as often as possible if they have different attendance patterns.

A separate or quiet space away from the main group is ideal but if this is not possible a clearly defined area will do. Use a rug to indicate the group area and aim to follow the same format each time for consistency.



### You will need:

- Box or bag
- Rug
- Toy animal
- Appropriate resources for each session as listed
- Velcro strips
- Symbols/pictures (looking, listening, sitting)
- Symbols for chosen activities time line
- Finished box
- Comment/evaluation sheet

### Suggested Session Plan

- Hello Song - including each child's name
- Will you be my friend? - singing & holding hands
- Introduce Toy Animal - one child has this each session
- Ground rules - sitting, listening, looking
- **1** activity from section 1
- **1** activity from section 2
- Knock, knock, knock story from section 3
- Good-bye song

### Explicit Praise

Use explicit praise to let a child know what it is that they have done well e.g. "That's really good waiting "(child's name)".

The activities are arranged into 3 sections within this booklet:

- Section 1 has activities selected to primarily develop attention and listening skills
- Section 2 has activities selected to primarily develop social interaction and communication skills
- Section 3 includes a script for a short story and suggestions of similar styles of storytelling (using puppets, props or pictures)

All activities support all aspects of speech, language and communication and practitioners must be flexible to facilitate these developing skills with a thorough understanding of the child's developmental levels, strengths and weaknesses.

It is intended that chosen activities are used over 3 sessions consecutively for example select 1 activity from section 1 and 1 activity from section 2 and finish the session with a story and 'Good-bye song'. In session 4 change the activity from section 1 but continue with the same activity from section 2 for three further sessions. In session 7 replace the activity from section 2 but continue with the same activity from section 1 for three more sessions and so on. By completing the sessions in this way, practitioners will teach listening skills, provide a good role model for social communication and facilitate general speech and language development.



# Getting Started

Use the rug or separate cushions to indicate where children should sit in a small group. Show children a visual strip of sequence of events if you are using one.

## **'Hello' - Song**

Start off with a fun 'Hello' song -

"Hello Jamie, Hello Jamie, Hello Jamie, Jamie say Hello"

(to the tune of 'Nice one Cyril')

or

"Jamie Tucker, Jamie Tucker - Where are you".

"Here I am, here I am, how do you do".

Or any other favourite song you may use in your own setting.

## **'Will you be my friend?' - Song**

Children hold hands with each other. Adult encourages children to swing arms gently whilst singing.

"Will you be my friend and hold my hand? Will you be my friend and hold my hand? Will you be my friend and hold my hand? Thank you very much."

You could sing this a second time, faster and swinging arms more quickly.

**Choose activities from section 1, 2 and 3.**



# Section one

Activities to facilitate the  
development of attention

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# Balloons

## What you will need

- assorted balloons
- balloon pump

## Activity

One at a time allow the children to choose a balloon. Explain that each child will get a turn and that you are going to pump each balloon up.

Whilst pumping each balloon up gradually emphasise the words “bigger, and bigger, and bigger”

Don't tie the balloon - help the child to hold on to the end whilst you encourage all children to join in saying - “ready, steady, GO!” Then let go of the balloon! Comment on the sound the balloon made and imitate it to the children so they listen next time.

Praise the child and talk about where the balloon went.

Repeat this giving each child a turn - praise good waiting and talk about taking turns.

## Vocabulary

- blow, puff, breath, hard work, push, pull, pop
- small, floppy, big, bigger, massive, huge
- flat, round, oval, pear, curved, sausage

Be aware of language level when considering words to use or introduce.



# Listen to silence

## What you will need

A tape recorder and pre-recorded tape of some environmental sounds - birds singing, cars, telephone ringing etc. There should be plenty of time between sounds so the children can hear the silence in between.

## Activity

Start by listening to the sounds of silence. Once you hear a sound - attract the children's attention to it - imitate it - point to a picture of what makes it - name it - encourage the children to name it and then say - *"Shh .... - let's sit here and listen for the next one"*.



# Musical Shakers

## Matching Sounds

### What you will need

Recycled, clear plastic bottles or containers with a selection of objects inside e.g. rice, pasta, milk bottle tops, buttons or dried peas.

### Activity

Allow the children to examine the shakers looking at what is inside them and what noise they make when you shake them. You could pass them round to let them listen to all the different sounds. You should talk about the sounds, naming the object that is inside.

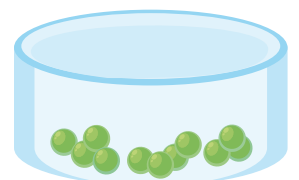
### Extend this activity

Place a second set of the shakers in front of a screen whilst you make a noise behind the screen with a matching one. Take turns explicitly stating whose turn it is to listen and then ask the children individually to point to the shaker they heard. If they select the incorrect shaker get them to listen again and support them to choose the correct one by pointing whilst shaking (promote success).

Following sessions can include other homemade instruments:

- cake tins
- ice-cream tubs with wooden spoons to bang
- jingly threaded cotton reels
- milk bottle tops

N.B. Be aware of children's differing skills and limit the number of objects to choose from accordingly.





# 'I'm thinking about.....'

## Guessing Game

### What you will need

A range of real objects, symbolic objects or picture prompts to select e.g. hat, apple, gloves, book, hair brush, paint brush - and a posting booklet.

### Activity

Have a selection of objects or prompts in the middle of the group. The adult says, *'I'm thinking about..... something I wear on my head'. (function of object)*

The adult says, *"I'm thinking about ..... something that is hairy" (attributes of object).*

Encourage the child to guess which one you are talking about. Use gestures as additional cues to support children's success when required. Recognise the comments you use and adjust language level as appropriate for each child.

Keep the children's interest by letting them put the clothes on, taking a bite from the apple etc. Get them to put objects into the 'posting box' once they have had their turn.

### Increase level of difficulty

Increase the number of objects to select from make instructions more difficult i.e. "I am thinking about two things - one that you eat and another that you wear on your head."



# Hunt the Animal

## What you will need

Animal toys, puppets or pictures - have a selection of animals that you can imitate the noise that they make

## Activity

Begin by showing the children the toys or pictures and name each one. As you name them pass them round and demonstrate the noise that each one makes. You could add in some gestures to aid comprehension.

Put the objects or pictures in front of a named child and make the appropriate noise. Support them to indicate which is the correct animal.

If the child selects the incorrect one - the adult should continue to be encouraging saying *“Good try (child’s name), I did (repeat the sound), this goes (repeat sound) whilst holding correct animal.*

If children are struggling to identify from a selection of four reduce the choice and make the sounds very different.

## Extend memory skills

Increase the number of choices (animals and sounds). Place pictures around the room and let children search (they need to hold sound in their memory for longer whilst searching)



# What's in the box (or feely bag)?

## What you will need

An interesting small box with lid (small enough to handle/pass round the group).

Two objects, one to put in the box e.g. coin(s), shell(s), conker(s) or ping pong ball/piece of Lego and another matching object to show the child so they can indicate choice.

## Activity

Each child holds the box and has a shake, listens, tests the weight and has a guess as to what might be in the box. Accept all forms of communication in response e.g. eye-pointing, finger pointing or vocalising.

When everyone has had a guess choose someone to open the box and show/tell everyone what it is - the adult then names the object.

As children become familiar with the game you could add more than one object, some of which may be 'silent' e.g. a handkerchief.

## Variation

Use a cloth draw-string bag, where the extra dimension of 'feeling' the object can be used to help with the guessing.



# What is it?

## Musical Instruments

### What you will need

Two identical sets of different musical instruments and a resources bag, large box or screen to hide the instruments.

### Activity

Instruments are placed on the floor in front of the children and the adult goes through the instrument by naming each and choosing a different child to demonstrate the sound it makes.

Explain that you are going to hide each instrument from view and that each child will be able to have a turn at listening and then identify the instrument by pointing, gesturing or saying the name of the one they hear.

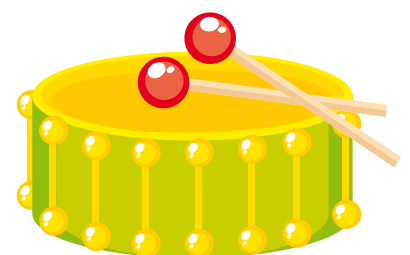
Support success by limiting the number of instruments on show with reference to the child's developmental level, language and attention and listening skill.

### Extend this activity

Once the children are able to listen and select each instrument increase the number of instruments to choose from. Try playing two sounds with different instruments or let the child take the adult's role in playing the hidden instrument.

### Vocabulary

Rattle, jingle, shake, tap, bang, tap-tap....



# Section two

Activities to facilitate development  
of social interaction skills

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# Roll-the-ball

## You will need

A selection of soft balls (including `novelty' balls for variety e.g. hedgehog ball).

## Activity

Sit the children in a circle on the floor and explain that they are going to roll the ball on the floor across the circle. Non-verbal children can point to the child they will be rolling the ball to - then name the person they are rolling to and then roll the ball to them.

## Make this harder

Each child in turn rolls the ball around their own body, just above the waist, without dropping it on the floor. Everyone else encourages them!

## Vocabulary

Bouncy, big, small, knobbly, rolls, aim, catch, round, behind, in front...



# Bubbles

## You will need

Tub of bubble mixture and wand.

## Activity

Tell the children you are going to blow some bubbles and (name a child) is going to chase and pop them.

Explain that each child will have a turn so that it will be fair.

State clearly this is “\_\_\_\_\_ *turn*”.

Dip the `wand' into the bubble solution and gently blow: watch and comment on the child's reaction.

Now is it “\_\_\_\_\_ *turn*”, repeat.

The child could do the task – watch out for bubble-solution spills!

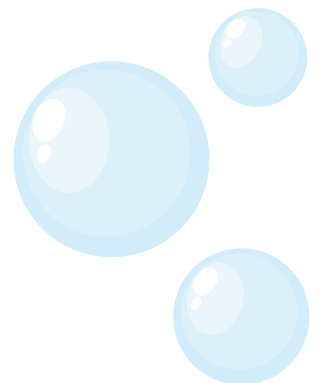
Praise (named) children for waiting for their turn; ensure that everyone has a turn.

As the bubbles float, talk about where they (and the moving child) are: up or down, what size they are, what colour they are, which direction they're going – simply and repetitively.

## Vocabulary

- pop! Disappear, gone, float, up and up, away, float...
- wobble, wobble, drip, puff, blow, slowly, carefully, light...
- wand, bubble-mixture, look, watch, burst...

Add more words as you and the children think of them.



# Choose an instrument you can play

## You will need

- a triangle and beater
- tambourine
- wooden `agogo' and beater
- bells, etc

## Activity

Children sit in a circle with all the instruments in the centre on the floor. The adult picks up each instrument and names each one, and shows:-

- how the triangle needs to be held (by the string) so that it makes the best sound when struck by the beater
- how to use the tambourine bells
- how the wooden agogo is held with one hand and the beater with the other

Choose and name a child to have the first go and sing:-

*“Choose an instrument you can play, you can play, you can play  
choose an instrument you can play: well done (child’s name)”.*

*(Tune: London Bridge)*

When they have chosen their instrument, preferably by naming it but pointing to it may be useful for some children they then claim the instrument and play it while you sing or recite:

*“(Child’s name) is playing the triangle, playing the triangle,  
playing the triangle (Child’s name) is playing the triangle: Well done.....”*

Repeat until every child has had a turn at choosing and playing the instruments of their choice.

If a child is reticent to play the instrument on his/her own others could clap along with them.

To prevent a child playing for too long the adult can clap and applaud at an appropriate pause!



# Mirrors

## You will need

- a mirror for each person
- emotions pictures - if available

## Activity

Give each child a mirror to look in and talk about smiling into the mirror - do it yourself!

Look at the different emotion pictures, one by one, name the emotion and then ask the children to try and copy the emotion, watching themselves in the mirror e.g looking:

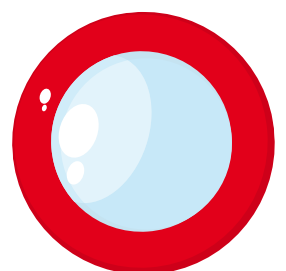
- sad
- angry
- sleepy
- shy
- happy/friendly

Each child can be doing this at the same time if appropriate.

If you don't have pictures then name an emotion and discuss with the children.

Model how to do it yourself:

- “gosh, my forehead is all wrinkled when I look cross!”
- “i can see my teeth when I smile”
- “my eyes close when I am sleepy”



# Parachute

## You will need

- a small parachute
- a soft ball

## Activity

When you first use the parachute ask the children to guess.

*“What’s in the bag?”* and see what ideas they come up with!

Explain that you are all going to play with this parachute by holding the edges of it all together.

Allow the group to investigate the parachute then explain that you are going to play some games together.

You can lift the parachute together and lower it together to make a draught!

Do this several times to enjoy the breeze.

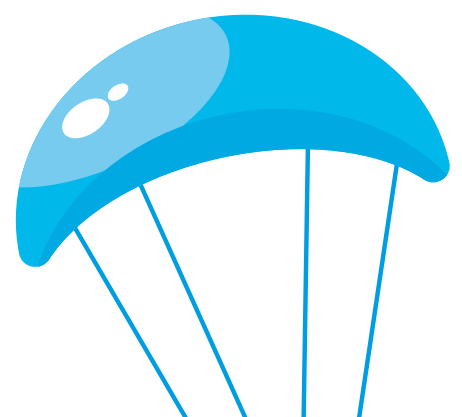
Now lift it up and look for each other under the parachute when it is lifted up.

Say *“Hello...Sita!”* (Child’s name).

Rest and suggest that on the next ‘lift’ a child can go and stand or sit underneath. Choose and name a child and invite him/her to sit under. Talk about taking turns and remind them they will all get a turn if they want.

Sit down together round the edges of the parachute and ask a child, one at a time, to lift the parachute and pull it down to create a wave which passes across the circle. Praise each attempt. *“Good lifting ...”*

Standing up, place a ball on the parachute and together try and keep the ball moving without it falling off the parachute (requires lots of concentration and cooperation).





# Pass the animal

## You will need

Hand puppets/instrument (s), animal hand puppets/soft toys

## Activity

Children sit in the circle, pass the puppet round whilst listening to the instrument or teacher humming a tune or singing a song:

*“Tiger is going round the ring, round the ring, round the ring, Tiger is going round the ring - where will he STOP?”*

*(Tune: Here we come gathering nuts in May.)*

The instrument, humming or singing stops -

*“It’s stopped at ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ that means it’s ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ turn to make the sound or move, like \_\_\_\_\_ (the animal).”*

Repeat for each child to have a turn.

*“I wonder whose turn it will be next”*

The child may want to make the animal speak: this is to be encouraged!

The adult can ensure that each child has a turn by stopping humming/singing at the appropriate times.

Repeat for each child to have a turn.

When the session is ended, collect the puppet (s) up with the song:

*“Away, away, away it goes, Away, away, away it goes, Away, away, away it goes, into the bag it goes.”*

*(Tune: Skip to my Lou.)*



# Tambourine

## You will need

Tambourine (might be half-moon: if it is, call it by this name)

## Activity

Show the tambourine - explain that it is a musical instrument and show the children what you can do with it.

*“Does anyone know what it is called?”*

Explain they are going to take turns.

Pass the tambourine round the group - sitting in a circle.

State whose turn it is and invite them to have a go.

Each child uses the tambourine in their own way.

Praise all efforts and put into words the actions.

*“Well done Geeta for shaking the tambourine up and down.”*

*“Well done Ben for tapping the edge of the tambourine.”*

## Extend this activity

Tie coloured ribbons to the tambourine to give an added dimension of movement and colour.

Pass the tambourine round without shaking the bells at all - this requires lots of concentration and skill!

Sing nursery rhymes and accompany with the tambourine - each child to have a turn shaking it.



# Stretchy Man

## You will need

Length of Lycra fabric

## Activity

Children sit in a circle firmly holding on to the edge of the fabric. Investigate the feel of the fabric and what it can do.

Sing a nursery rhyme together (one with no actions so their hands don't let go!) e.g. *"Baa, baa, black sheep"* and at the end say *"ready, steady"* and on the word *"go"* everyone lets go of the material.

## Make this harder

Work as a group to pull and stretch together. Name a child who will say *'Ready, steady, go'* and everyone do what they say!

Swing the fabric from side to side *'la-laaing'* a lullaby song and gently lower the fabric to the ground together.

All lie down on the floor with feet underneath the fabric and hands holding the edge as though going to sleep; when someone shouts *"wakey wakey!"* everyone scrabbles to sit up and lets go of the *'bed sheet'*!

## Vocabulary

- pull, stretch, hold, tight, up and down
- waves, high, low, muscles, puff, pant



# Section three

Activities specifically included for facilitating development of attention and listening skills and social interaction within a small group through Story Telling

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# Bag Books

'Bag Books' are a method of storytelling using a bag of props, puppets or pictures to tell a story rather than a book. The adult has a 'script' in their head and tells the story to the children. The aim is for all the children in the group to participate in the story by:-

- giving them a role in the story eg: by giving them a toy animal and asking them to listen out for that animal in the story, then make the animal noise or do an action with the animal or...
- encouraging each child in the group, to join in each stage of the story by passing around props/puppets so that they can repeat the words or action modelled by the adult.

The aim is to promote attention and listening skills, confidence and social interaction through active listening and participation in the story.

Children are encouraged to:

- make eye contact
- listen
- attend
- take turns with an adult or small group of peers
- use their senses to touch, smell, see and listen to the story
- respond to the words or actions of the story at their own level
- share the fun and enjoyment of words and actions with others

Always remember to repeat the same words to each child in the group (groups no bigger than 4-6 children).

Use an interesting voice; it's up to you to capture the interest of the children. If you enjoy the story so will the children.

The following pages include one example of a 'bag book' script (produced by Mary Petty) plus another example of how you could create your own story using the props you have available in your setting.

Have fun!

Produced by Mary Petty  
Early Years Support Team  
Beaumont Leys Surestart





# Who's knocking at the door

## 1. Who's knocking at the door?

Support child to use the doorknocker.

## 2. Is it the policeman with his hat on?

Place policeman's hat on child's head.

## 3. Is it the cat? "Meow." Does he want his dinner?

Support the child to stroke the fur fabric.

## 4. Is it the fireman with his water squirter?

Gently squirt the child with the water.

## 5. Is it the doctor come to listen to your cough?

Support the child to listen to his chest with the stethoscope.

## 6. Is it Grandma with her glasses?

Support child to try on the glasses.

## 7. No it's the postman with a parcel!

Let the child put hand in the box and pick out a surprise.

Devised by Mary Petty  
Early Years Support Team  
Beaumont Leys Sure Start Children's Centre  
from an original 'Bag Books' idea by Chris Fuller.

## Items needed for this bag book

- door knocker fixed on a board
- Policeman's hat
- board with fur fabric or toy cat
- water squirter
- toy stethoscope
- pair of joke glasses
- box covered in bright paper with hole in the top so child can put his hand in. Tie it up with ribbon and place inside interest items e.g. bubbles, stickers, and chocolate



# The Buzzy Bee

Buzzy Bee and his friend Caterpillar were playing on the leaves. The caterpillar was curling up into a little ball- **CURL! CURL! CURL!**

'This is fun' said the caterpillar, 'curl up with me!'

So Buzzy Bee tried to curl up into a ball .....but he couldn't.

'Try again' said the caterpillar, 'watch me!'

**CURL! CURL! CURL!**

Buzzy bee tried as hard as he could.... But he couldn't curl up into a ball.

Buzzy bee was very sad (*everybody do a sad face*).

He went off for a walk on his own.

Soon he met his friend Dog –

'**Woof!**' said dog 'Why are you sad?'

'Because I can't curl up in a ball, can you?'

'No' said Dog 'but I can wag my tail, watch me!' **WAG! WAG! WAG!**

Buzzy Bee tried to wag... but he didn't have a tail!

Buzzy Bee carried on walking and soon he met his friend Frog.

'**Gribbit!**' said Frog, 'Why are you sad?'

'because I can't wag my tail, can you?'

'No' said Frog, 'but I can jump, watch me!'

**JUMP! JUMP! JUMP!**

Buzzy Bee tried as hard as he could ....but he couldn't jump.

Buzzy Bee carried on walking and soon he met his friend Monkey.

'**OooOooOoo!**' said Monkey, 'Why are you sad?'

'Because I can't jump, can you?'

'No' said Monkey 'but I can swing, watch me!'

**SWING! SWING! SWING!**

Buzzy Bee tried to swing ....but he didn't have any arms.

Buzzy Bee was very sad (*everybody do a sad face*)

He carried on walking and soon he met his friend elephant.

'**Trumpet!**' said the elephant, 'Why are you sad?'

'Because I can't swing, can you?'

'No' said Elephant 'but I can spray water out of my trunk – look' (*spraying noise*) '...What can you do?'

Buzzy Bee thought... 'Mmmm..... I can fly – watch me!!' - **buzzzzzz**

'Wow' said Elephant, 'I can't do that!'

Then Buzzy Bee flew off – he flew over Monkey, **buzzzzzz**, 'Wow' said Monkey and Monkey tried to fly but he couldn't.

Then Buzzy Bee flew over Frog, **buzzzzzz** 'Wow!' said Frog and he tried to fly but he couldn't.

Then Buzzy Bee flew over Dog, **buzzzzzz** 'Wow!' said Dog and he tried to fly but he couldn't.

Then Buzzy Bee flew back to his friend Caterpillar, **buzzzzzz** 'Wow, you can fly, I can't do that!' said Caterpillar

'Yes!' said Buzzy Bee, 'We can all do different things!'

## Notes/Suggestions

- the adult can hold the Bee and give out the other characters to the children. Ask the children to listen out for their animal, make the animal noises and do the actions
- if you don't have these animals then just use the ones you can find in your setting and change the words accordingly
- make up your own stories!

