

Other things to try: 6a

Attending to an adult-led activity for longer (encouraging attention and listening)



Why is this important?

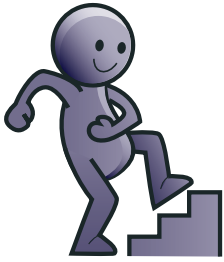
Developing children's attention and listening skills is particularly important for success in school. These are learned skills and need to be actively encouraged and practised.

What to do

- Collect an inset puzzle and put all the pieces into a bag.
- Show the child how many pieces there are.
- Encourage the child to delve into the bag to retrieve the pieces one at a time to complete the puzzle.
- Vary the length of time the child needs to concentrate on the task by either increasing or reducing the number of puzzle pieces in the bag.

Alternative themes

- Give the child some small pictures to colour in or decorate. Vary the number of pictures the child needs to complete before finishing, or how much time will be spent on the activity.
- Tell a story, making it longer or shorter depending on how long the child is able to sit and listen. Involve the child in the story as much as possible (e.g. acting out, holding props) to maintain attention.
- Put the pieces for a lotto game in a bag. Give the child one board and you have the other. Take it in turns to take a piece out of the bag and match it to the board. If it doesn't match put it back.



Step up

- Increase the time spent on the activity-building concentration.
- Link two activities (e.g. build the tower *and* complete the puzzle).
- Increase the range of external distractions (e.g. a noisy environment, other children at the table).

Step down

- Keep the activities short – even a few seconds – and build up.
- Use a visual cue so the child knows when the activity will end. For example, place a Velcro strip on a piece of card and stick card circles to the Velcro to represent the number of turns the child is expected to make. As the child takes a turn with the activity, help him/her take the circles off the Velcro until they are all gone, signalling the end of the activity.
- Try using a visual cue like an egg timer: the game stops when the sand has all run through.
- Use rewards to motivate the child to finish. For example, at the end of your visual cue (see above), put a picture of a small reward (e.g. a sticker or five minutes with a favourite toy/game).

