

Support attention and listening

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Supporting language and communication skills' from the Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Includes:

- Develop clear expectations
- Support self-regulation
- Support active participation
- Improve classroom acoustics
- Support active listening
- Useful resources

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From

Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Strategy: [Supporting language and communication skills](#)

Suggestion: [Support attention and listening](#)

Date

17 May 2024

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/support-attention-and-listening

Develop clear expectations

In partnership with your students, develop clear expectations of what these behaviours look and sound like.

This can include:

- teaching how to take turns to talk
- using a friendly voice
- using body language to show that they are listening
- one person speaking at a time
- signals and gestures to show they would like to talk
- respecting personal space and boundaries (for example, being reasonably close but not invading the speaker's personal space).

Sensitivity to a person's culture is always needed. For example, in some cultures eye contact is considered rude or intrusive.

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Support self-regulation

Some learners require extra supports to self regulate and stay focused.

Consider making available:

- an inflatable cushion that allows students to wiggle a bit while remaining seated on a chair or the floor
- hand fidgets that keep hands busy and out of trouble
- a time timer which can help students “keep it together” by giving them a visual cue about how much longer they are expected to be quiet or focus on a given task
- a weighted lap pad or weighted vest or blanket to provide calming sensory input as well as a physical cue to stay in place.

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Support active participation

Support periods of focused listening.

Options that actively engage learners can include:

- sticky notes to record key ideas, give feedback, or sequence ideas
- small whiteboards to answer questions
- opportunities to move and regroup (for example, think-pair-share)
- response cards (for example, numeracy cards or [emotions cards](#) for giving feedback)
- chunking tasks and information to include breaks in between
- being explicit about what listening looks like (for example, staying quiet while the other person talks)
- using motivation (for example, first we will do this, then you will have time to do your preferred task)
- providing a listening timeframe or visual timer (for example, I will explain this task for 10 minutes).

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Improve classroom acoustics

Classroom acoustic and noise affects learners ability to hear, to attend, and to listen.

Simple ways to make a classroom quieter include the following:

- place rugs and carpets around the room
- hang curtains or blinds in the windows
- hang soft materials such as felt or cork board on the walls
- place tables at an angle around the room instead of in rows
- turn off noisy equipment when it is not in use
- replace noisy light fixtures
- show students how hard it can be to hear when many children talk at the same time
- place soft tips on the bottom of chairs and tables.

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Support active listening

Proactively support students to listen by reducing distractions and supporting attention.

- ✓ chunk information into small parts
- ✓ use simple visual information to support (for example, holding up three fingers when giving the instructions to show there are three parts)
- ✓ repeat the instructions at least twice
- ✓ invite students to sit closer to the teacher
- ✓ clarify understanding with visuals, objects, and diagrams
- ✓ break up verbal instructions with physical activities
- ✓ during group activities, encourage the student to watch the faces of the other students when they speak and sit in a semicircle
- ✓ consider a sound field system.

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Useful resources



Raising a sensory smart child – Working with schools

Sensory experiences for a child at school to maintain calm and avoid overload.

Publisher: Raising a Sensory Smart Child

[Visit website](#)



Socratic seminar and discussion sentence frames

A socratic seminar is a student discussion. It's aim is to try to surface different perspectives and points of view. Students can use these sentence starters to support their participation. They could be printed or students could have them on a personal device.

Publisher: Goalbook

[Visit website](#)

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