



Chapter 6

Listening skills

With help, children who cannot hear well can learn to listen more carefully to the sounds they are able to hear. Understanding more about sounds will help them learn more about their world and will help them use their hearing better, protect themselves, be safer, and become more able to take care of their own needs.

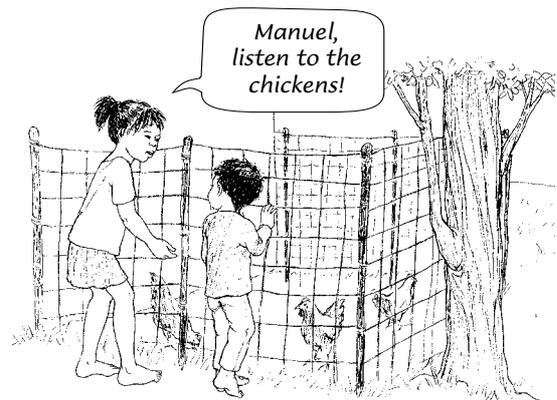
Some children can hear a little when people speak to them. Many children who cannot hear well may be able to hear loud noises, even if they cannot hear softer ones. Or they may hear a low-pitch sound like thunder, even if they cannot hear a high-pitch sound like a whistle. But because the sounds do not make sense to them, they do not pay attention to them.

If children practice listening, it will help them develop and use whatever hearing they may have.

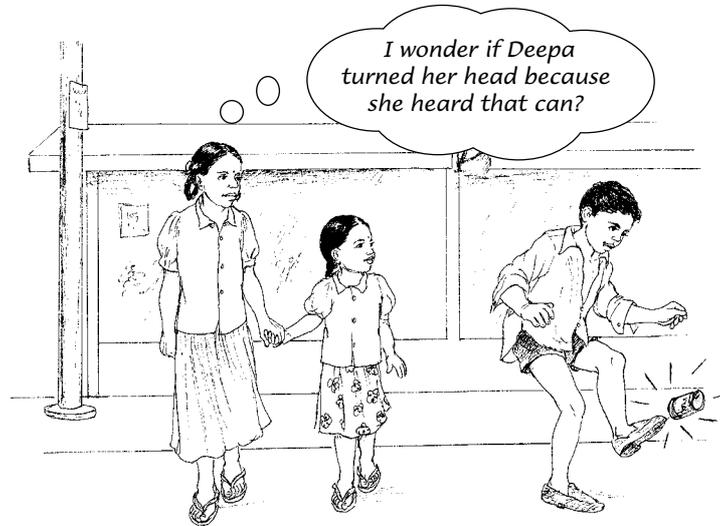
To use his hearing better, a child must:

- notice sounds or voices.
- figure out the direction the sound or voice comes from.
- recognize what the sound is.
- tell the difference between sounds.

This chapter has activities that will encourage a child to look, to listen, and to feel the vibrations of sound. The activities will help children who cannot hear well learn more about sounds. The activities will also help you find out whether a child has some hearing, and what kind of sounds and words the child can hear. This information will help you know if it would be better for your child to learn a spoken language or a sign language.



As you do the activities in this chapter, look for signs that show the child is listening to a sound. She might show she is listening by turning her head, changing the look on her face, moving her body, getting very still, blinking her eyes, or making a sound herself.



Praise her if she responds to sounds and words. If she does not respond, repeat the sound if you can. Try moving the sound closer to her rather than making it louder. Be patient. It takes time for a child to develop listening skills.

As you practice listening, try to notice background noise. Even pleasant background sounds might keep a child from hearing your voice or picking out the one sound you want her to hear. If the child uses a hearing aid, remember that hearing aids make your voice louder but make other sounds louder too, including background noise.



Azlina heard some of her father's words. But because of the noise the other children are making, she is not sure exactly what he said.

Tips for parents

Try to become more aware yourself of the sounds around you. People who can hear often ignore sounds because they have become so familiar. They also know when to take more care, because they can recognize sounds that can mean danger.



Listening skills are important for all children who cannot hear well. Children will be safer if they learn to use whatever hearing they have.

Try to adapt the activities in this chapter so that your child is working with sounds she can hear. For example, if you know she can hear low-pitch sounds but not high ones, use sounds with low pitches when doing the activities. (See Chapter 5 for ways to learn what sounds your child can hear.) If you are not sure what sounds your child can hear, try different sounds.



ACTIVITIES

► Ways to help your child notice sounds

- When you hear a sound nearby, show your child that something is happening. Encourage her to look toward the sound.

*Look, Sayaka,
up in the sky!
It's an airplane.*



- Let your child play with toys that make noise. From time to time, call her attention to the sound. If the toys do not make a lot of noise, tie something that makes noise, like a bell, onto the toy.

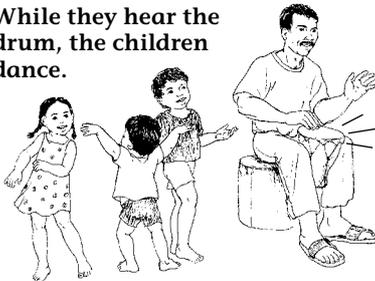
*That's a loud
noise, Radha!*



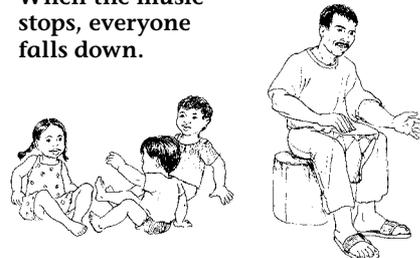
- Find sounds you can start and stop. Let your child know that something is about to happen and then make the sound. Repeat the sound several times. Try pointing to your ear when a sound is made. This will help your child know when a sound is made.

- Make up games in which your child needs to listen to sounds in order to play.

While they hear the drum, the children dance.



When the music stops, everyone falls down.



Some adults are not used to playing and may feel uncomfortable joining in activities with children. But music can help your child learn to use her hearing, and is a good way to involve other adults and children. Think of the songs you sang as a child, or learn songs that other children know. Choose songs that are happy, that have a nice rhythm, and that everybody can sing together. Adults and children can all be included. Make singing an everyday family activity.

► Ways to help your child notice people's voices

- Talk to your child as you hold her close. When she is touching your chest, neck, or cheek she will feel some vibration from the sound of your voice.
- As you do things with your child, make up sounds that go along with the activities.
- Say her name often.

You're getting to be such a big girl, Efra.



Rub-a-dub-



Juana! Come to me, Juana.



- When your child knows her name, use her name in songs and stories you make up. This will help catch her interest.
- Talk with your child as often as you can. Use your voice in different ways. Try stretching words, and add high and low pitches. Use words that have opposite meanings.

Once there was a little girl named Seema...



Up... up... up...



...and downwwwn.



A word that stretches a sound ('downwwn') in contrast with an opposite short word ('up') gives sound clues that help young children understand.

► **How to learn the direction a sound comes from**

Children first learn to locate sounds that happen near their ears. Then they learn to look for the source of sounds that are above or below their ears. Then they look for the source of sounds that are farther and farther away. Finally, children learn to look for the source of sound that is behind them.

- If your child is interested in a noisy toy that you are sure she can hear, try moving it out of sight. Then make the noise again above her ears and see if she will turn her head to search for it. When she has learned to do this, make noise below the level of her ears. Finally, make a noise behind her.



Try to be patient, because it can take several months for a child to turn toward sounds. When she responds some of the time (even if not all the time), you can move on to the next step.

- Change the expression on your face, or call attention to the sound with a gesture — like pointing to your ear and then to what is making the sound.



- Try hiding a noisy toy in your pocket. See if the child can find it while you make noise with it.

What's that sound, Lupe?
Where is it?



► **Ways to help your child recognize what a sound is**

- Notice common sounds that she hears and help her name them.

Hear the knocking?
Someone wants to come in.

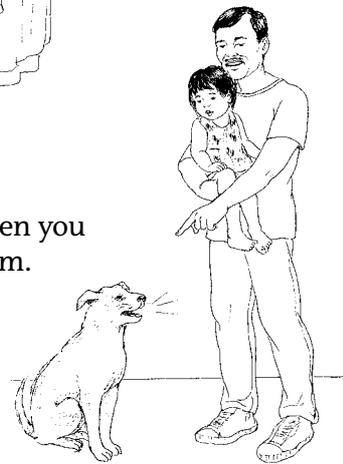


- When your child shows interest in a sound, explain what it is. Let them make the noise so they can hear it, learn where the sound comes from, and feel the vibration.

Here's how you blow the whistle...



- Take your child to different places and when you hear sounds show her what is making them.

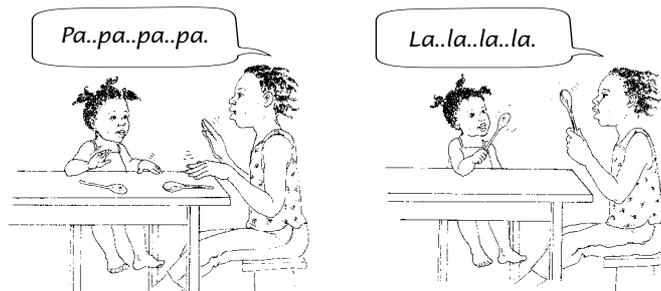


- Show her how to make different sounds herself.



► **Ways to help your child notice when 2 sounds are different**

- Find 2 things that make different sounds. Remember, they must have a pitch and loudness your child can hear. Put them in front of your child. Show her the noise each thing makes. Then ask her to close her eyes while you make a noise with one of the things. When she opens her eyes, ask her to show you which thing she thinks made the noise.
- Together, make up movements for 2 or 3 similar sounds. Then ask your child to make the movement whenever you make the sound. Here is an example with speech sounds:



- Have your child guess who in the family is speaking by the sound of their voice. This will also help her learn to tell whether a man or woman is talking.



Is my child learning to listen?

You will need to do all these activities many times, over and over. After about 6 months, check your child's hearing again (see Chapter 5). You may find your child can hear more sounds than before. This does not mean her hearing has changed. It simply means she has learned to use her hearing better. Praise your child when she notices sounds and words.

As you practice together, try to build on what she has learned by using all the sounds she can hear. As a child learns more words and understands them better, she will be able to express herself better and be able to communicate more.