

## TIP SHEET

# Listening To Others



Have you ever noticed how some young children just do not seem to know how to listen to others?

When someone is talking to them, children may not stop playing in order to look up and acknowledge the other person. Children might start listening to someone else, but soon get bored and change the subject or simply turn away.

Like other social skills, the skill of “active listening” is one that some children have to be explicitly taught. Day care is the perfect setting in which to teach this skill, but how?

Here are some strategies that you might find helpful in teaching young children to be good listeners:

## **Helping Children Become Good Listeners**

### **1) Direct Class-Wide Teaching**

#### **What is Direct Class-Wide Teaching?**

There are some skills that, while particularly chal-

lenging for certain students, can be taught to the whole class or to small groups of children.

Using this strategy, you directly teach the whole class specific social skills (what to say and do in a specific social situation) and then give them opportunities to practice the skills in a natural environment.

By using class-wide teaching, all children can benefit from learning, practicing and being reinforced for a specific skill.

When you are teaching a group of children a specific social skill, remember that, as with any skill, it might be easy for some children and more challenging for others.

Direct Class-Wide Teaching of social skills is most successful when you are:

- **PATIENT** - some children might need more reminders, more support, and more time to learn and use the skill;

## Listening To Others, continued

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- **CONSISTENT** – make sure that you and any other adults in the child’s life have the same expectations of the child;
- **POSITIVE** – remember to spot children using the skill and reinforce them as much and as specifically as possible.

Here is an example of how to use Direct Class-Wide Teaching to teach children how to be good listeners:

### Facilitate

Facilitate a discussion that gets the children thinking about the skill.

- “How can you be a good listener?”
- “What does a good/bad listener do?”
- “How does it feel when you are talking to someone, and they are/aren’t listening to you?”

### Teach

Teach the children a rule that will help them understand and use the skill. A Social Script can be helpful at this stage.

“When someone is talking to you, you should stop. You should not talk at the same time as someone else. You can show them that you are interested in what they are saying by being quiet and listening to them.”

### Role play

Give the children an opportunity to practice the skill by doing a role play or puppet show.

At first, two adults can do the role play and then encourage the children to try. Demonstrate a correct and incorrect example of good listening so that the children are very clear about the words and actions that you are expecting.

### Reinforce

Tell the children that you will be watching for this skill for a week. Reinforce children who display the skill and remember to label the behaviour that you want to see.



“Look at how well Ahmed is listening to Tamara. He stopped playing, looked at her, and listened quietly without interrupting.”

### Review

Talk about the skill for a few minutes each day so that it is fresh in the children’s minds and reinforces the importance of social skills.

At the end of the week, facilitate a discussion so that the children can talk about how it felt using the skill throughout the week.

- “Who remembered to be a good listener this week?”
- “How did it feel when other kids listened to you when you talked?”

## 2) Social Scripts

### What is a Social Script?

A Social Script is a method of teaching children how to behave in specific social situations. It might include a short description of a challenging social situation and then it provides suggestions of specific things the child can say or do in response to the social situation.

### How do I use a Social Script?

It is best to work on one script at a time in order to keep things clear for the child.

Review and practice the script at least once a day when it is first introduced. As the child begins to understand and use the new skill, you can practice the script less often and refer back to it to remind the child what to do in specific situations.

It is not a good idea to try using the Social Script while the situation is happening. Instead, review it

at the beginning of the day and then, when the situation actually occurs, you can remind the children of the strategies they have learned.

Children can practice the Social Script by doing role-plays or by using puppets or dolls.

Depending on the child's skill level, you can write a Social Script using words only, or you can add pictures or photographs to help depict each step. Here is an example of Social Scripts written to help a child learn how to "listen to others".

As an Early Childhood Educator you know how important it is that children learn how to be good, active listeners. It makes everyone feel valued and important. Listening to others is also an important way for children to learn about the world around them.

### When someone is talking to me, I should:



**STOP** doing what I am doing



**LOOK** at the person who is talking



**LISTEN** to the person who is talking

### For more information:

- Take a look at some of the other social skills in this section such as: [Getting Someone's Attention](#), [Turn Taking](#), [Sharing](#), [Joining in Play](#) and [Personal Space](#).
- Visit our workshop on [Visual Communication](#).