Listening and Attention Skills
The Stages of Development

Fleeting Attention
• The child is easily distracted and attention flits from one thing to another.

Rigid Attention
• The child can concentrate on a task of his own choice but he cannot tolerate interruption by an adult.

Single Channelled Attention
• The child cannot cope with doing one thing and listening to an instruction about something else at the same time; he has to do one or the other.
• If an adult wants to give an instruction, the child must be asked to stop his activity, listen to the adult and then return to his task.

Focusing Attention
• The child is gradually beginning to control his own focus of attention but can still only concentrate on one thing at a time.
• The child can now shift their focus of attention from one to the other independently.

Two Channelled Attention
• The child can do a task and understand an instruction at the same time.
• Concentration span might be short but he can be taught in a group.

Integrated Attention
• Two channelled attention is well established across different situations and with different people.
Listening and Attention Skills

- Be aware of where a child is developmentally re: attention
- Do not assume that children know what ‘good listening’ is
- Teach good listening skills – use pictures and gestures to support
  - Good looking
  - Good sitting
  - Good waiting (turn taking)
  - Good listening
- Teach each aspect separately – be explicit in what you require
- Be consistent, reinforce aspects of ‘good listening’ – give specific praise
- Focus the children’s attention before giving an instruction – use their name if possible
- If using a group name, make sure that all children know that they belong in that group
- Reduce background noise and distractions when possible
- Reduce level of language – use short, simple sentences
- Use non-verbal supports to help a child understand and maintain attention
- Use a visual timetable so you can be explicit about what comes next – make it time-bound – use a timer as a visual support. Refer to the timetable at every transition.
- Set a target with the child/children for how much work that child will do independently before needing teacher support
- Use a multi-sensory approach to maintain attention skills
- Teach active listening skills using barrier games

Soft start / whole class activities to develop attention:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jigsaw puzzles</th>
<th>Fine motor tasks</th>
<th>Dot to dot</th>
<th>Steal the keys / bell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find the odd-one-out</td>
<td>Spot the difference</td>
<td>Maze puzzles</td>
<td>Copy ‘the teacher’ (no spoken language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory games</td>
<td>Categorising and sorting</td>
<td>Picture books</td>
<td>I went shopping and I bought . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Says</td>
<td>Musical chairs/lions etc.</td>
<td>Learning songs and rhymes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This resource includes good behaviour reminder strips for children and reminder cards for class display. Prompts are sit nicely, look, listen, no talking, put up your hand to answer. The large cards can be wall mounted or mounted on handles for the teacher to use at carpet time. The strips can be used around the classroom/desks to reinforce the rules. Backed with blue, which is supposed to have a calming effect.