

Improving a child's memory

- Children with speech and language difficulties and/or specific learning difficulties often have poor short-term auditory memory. A child with poor short-term auditory memory will have difficulty storing, processing and remembering spoken information.
- Children with poor short-term auditory memory often have a better visual memory. Both the adult and the child should be encouraged to make use of the stronger visual memory to help support the limited auditory memory.
- Supporting poor short-term auditory memory by developing strategies is important for developing the child's spoken and written language skills.

STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS TO AID MEMORY

We can help children with poor auditory memory to learn by using the following strategies:

- Speak more slowly - This allows the child to have more processing time and more chance of remembering what you say.
- Present spoken information in chunks - Break instructions down using 'first, next, last...'
- Try to reduce background noise to a minimum and position the child near to you.
- Use visual aids - This is one of the most important ways of supporting poor auditory memory. Use appropriate gestures and refer to relevant objects and/or pictures/diagrams by pointing to them or holding them up whilst you are talking.
- Repeat before rephrasing - Repeating language that is at their level gives the child a second chance to process what you have said. (Rephrasing means that they have to process something new!) Encourage the child to ask for repetition.
- Use language that is at the child's level.
- Be aware that some ways of speaking put greater demand on auditory memory. E.g. "Before you play on the X-Box, I want you to tidy your bedroom." It is better to say, "First tidy your bedroom. Then play on the X-Box" i.e. Order of mention corresponds to order of action.

STRATEGIES TO TEACH THE CHILD TO USE

It is important to remember that whatever strategy you are developing with the child, you must explain:

- What it is
 - Why you are using it
 - Model it for the child
- Teach and encourage the use of 'Stop-Look-Listen' attitudes when instructions are being given.
 - Verbal rehearsal - The child is taught to repeat new words or instructions out loud. New words should be practiced out loud at least 5 times. The child repeating words/instructions means that she/he will store it more accurately and therefore remember it better.
 - Sub-vocal rehearsal. The child repeats the information he/she has heard in his/her head.
 - Visualization - the child is asked to form mental pictures to aid recall of information (this is only suitable for children of 8 upwards).
 - Chunking information - encourage the child to chunk the information he/she has heard. Teach the child to break the instruction or list into more manageable steps e.g. " Put your book in your bag, and fetch your coat.
 - Key words - practice helping the child identify the key words in an instruction. The adult should also emphasise these words when giving the instruction. This makes the most important words become more obvious to the child and helps him/her remember the whole instruction better.

NORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD'S ABILITY TO USE AUDITORY MEMORY STRATEGIES

- 4 years:** Child is not aware that strategies are available to help his/her memory
- 5-6 years:** Child names things often aloud to help his/her memory
- 7 years:** Child realizes that strategies are available but can't use them spontaneously. They need an adult to show them what to do.
- 10 years:** Child can spontaneously use rehearsal i.e. repeating specific information to improve his/her memory. Starts to be able to use visualization to aid memory.
- 11 years:** Child can name things (silently), rehearse, chunk and group information without prompts from an adult. Some children maybe using visualization to aid memory.