

Speech and Language Therapy

# **Exploring for More Early Attention**

## **Lesson number 3 of 14 on Attention and Listening**

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# Early Attention and Exploring

Play that gives the child the opportunity to **explore** is crucial in developing early attention skills.

Exploring new objects and situations through their **senses** children can have **more opportunities to respond**.

Through this active exploration, children **learn about their world**.



# Thinking and Exploring

Exploring objects and experiences should only be for short periods of time.

New object/experiences should provide sensory experiences.

The adult needs to:

- Use their **Stop, Look and Listen** strategies
- Use **LOTS of enthusiasm and excitement** in their voice and face to capture and model attention.
- Use a few **key words** to label and comment on the experience or object.



# Thinking and Exploring

Watch for **signals** that give messages such as 'I like' this 'I want more' or 'I don't like this'.

If the signal is positive, respond with more or repeat the action.

If the message is 'I don't like it' or 'I've had enough' try **exploring** the object or activity **in another way before moving on**.

*For example, with bubbles if the child doesn't engage or enjoy bubbles being blown around their face, you could try blowing them against their hand so they can feel them as well.*



# Golden Rules

- 1 - Place the object where the child can **see it and reach for it (or have 2 of them)**
  - 2 - **Stop and wait** for the pupil to take or reach for the object. Remember to give plenty of time.
  - 3 - If they don't, **show** them exploring it looks like (e.g. looking at it, moving it, making it make an action or output)
  - 4 - **Observe** any messages
  - 5 - **Respond** to those messages
- If the message is 'I like it' give the pupil more time with the object. Help them to feel it.
- 6 - **Say** something about the activity - just one or two key words



# Communicating Early Attention when Exploring

There are two key messages we are likely to see during play. These are detailed below with some descriptions of how a child might communicate these messages.

I like this, more please, I want that	I don't like this, no more please, I don't want that
Eyes - looking between you and the object or fixing their gaze on the object	Eyes - not focusing or looking away
Hands - reaching or touching	Hands - withdrawing or pushing the object away
Face - smiling or nodding	Face - frowning, turning head away
Mouth - making sounds or words	Mouth - making different sounds or words, clamping mouth closed
Body - moving arms and legs with excitement OR being very still because I'm thinking!	Body - keeping still, wriggling more, trying to move away
A combination of the above or something completely different (you know the child best!)	A combination of the above or something completely different!



# Reassurance

Keep things short and sweet!

Avoid turning this or any activity into a battle of wills.

Keep encouraging your child by saying their name.

Keep adding more excitement and enthusiasm into your voice.

Use objects to increase fascination with your eyes/face e.g. strange, oversized or coloured classes, or shiny stickers by your eyes.

Maintain warmth and positive facial expressions to give praise engagement and early attention.

Perseverance is key!



## **Ideas for more early play and exploring using the senses - All of these activities will provide you with the opportunity to provide different sensory inputs for your child to respond to.**

Looking - introducing interesting objects to look at, such as: musical mobiles, hanging mirrors, holographic paper, christmas baubles, glitter wands, torches and light up toys, wind up toys, brightly coloured materials, balloons and bubbles.

Smelling - introduce smell based variations to your play and everyday routines for example: Use smelly creams or oils for massage, creating smelly pots or sponges (with scents soaked into them) e.g. lavender, perfume etc, smelling foods in play, and homemade scented playdough recipes.

Tasting - Introduce a range of foods of different textures and flavours into food exploration.





Hearing - Use lots of song and experiment with different volume, tone, pitch and intonation through activities, songs and singing. Try introducing a song or piece of music to signal a certain activity e.g. hello song, or a tooth brushing song. Say a consistent word every time a daily activity occurs, in time it will act as a signal for the activity e.g. snack

Touch - Introduce different toys and activities that will provide a wider range of touch based input. For example touch based rhymes such as 'round and round the garden', light touch activities for example playing with materials or feathers, water play and playing with toys of different textures.



# Special Time Diary

Date:

We learnt about

\_\_\_\_\_

When my adult

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Insert picture

