

Letters and Sounds: Phase 1 – Aspect 1

Environmental Sounds

Main purposes

Tuning into Sounds

To develop children's listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

Listening and Remembering Sounds

Further development of vocabulary and children's identification and recollection of the difference between sounds.

Talking About Sounds

To make up simple sentences and talk in greater detail about sounds.



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Listening Walks

Tuning into Sounds – To develop children's listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

This is a listening activity that can take place indoors or outdoors. Remind the children about the things that good listeners do (e.g. keep quiet, have ears and eyes ready). Invite the children to show you how good they are at listening and talk about why listening carefully is important.

Encourage the children to listen attentively to the sounds around them. Talk about the different sounds they can hear. The children could use 'cupped ears' or make big ears on headbands to wear as they go on the listening walk. After the children have enjoyed a listening walk indoors or outdoors, make a list of all the sounds they can remember. The list can be in words or pictures and prompted by replaying sounds recorded on the walk.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- recall sounds they have heard;
- discriminate between the sounds;
- describe the sounds they hear.

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A Listening Moment

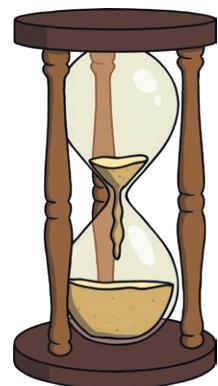
Tuning into Sounds – To develop children’s listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

This is another activity that can take place indoors or outdoors. Remind the children how to be good listeners and invite them to show how good they are at listening by remembering all the sounds they hear when they listen for a moment. It may be useful to use a sand timer to illustrate, for example, the passing of half a minute. Ask them what made each sound and encourage them to try to make the sound themselves.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- recall sounds they have heard;
- discriminate between the sounds;
- describe the sounds they hear.



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Drum Outdoors

Tuning into Sounds – To develop children’s listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

Give each child a beater or make drumsticks, for example, from short pieces of dowel. Encourage the children to explore the outdoor area and discover how different sounds are made by tapping or stroking, with their beaters, a wooden door, a wire fence, a metal slide, and a few other items, such as pipes and upturned pots you have ‘planted’. The activity could be recorded and/or photographed. Ask each child to demonstrate their favourite sound for the rest of the group. The whole group can join in and copy. Ask each child to take up position ready to make their favourite sound. An adult or a child acts as conductor and raises a beater high in the air to signal the children to play loudly and lowers it to signal playing softly.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- recall sounds they have heard;
- discriminate between the sounds;
- describe the sounds they hear.

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Teddy Is Lost in the Jungle

Tuning into Sounds – To develop children’s listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

One child (the rescuer) is taken aside while a teddy bear is hidden somewhere in the room. Tell the other children they are going to guide the rescuer to the teddy by singing louder as the rescuer gets closer to, or quietly as the rescuer moves further away from the teddy. Alternatively, lead the children in singing a familiar song, rhyme or jingle, speeding up and slowing down to guide the rescuer.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- recall sounds they have heard;
- discriminate between the sounds;
- describe the sounds they hear.



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Sound Lotto

Tuning into Sounds – To develop children’s listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment.

There are many commercially produced sound lotto games that involve children matching pictures to a taped sound. This can be an adult-led small group activity or can be provided within the setting as a freely chosen activity.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- recall sounds they have heard;
- discriminate between the sounds;
- describe the sounds they hear.

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Sounds Stories

Listening and Remembering Sounds – Further development of vocabulary and children’s identification and recollection of the difference between sounds.

There are many commercially available resources with pre-recorded sounds to illustrate a simple sequence of events (e.g. a thunderstorm). Each child selects two or three picture cards that match the sounds, places the cards in the same order in which the sounds are heard and explains the sequence of events.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- describe what they see;
- identify the animals and imitate the sounds;
- add new words to their vocabulary.



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Mrs Browning has a Box

Listening and Remembering Sounds – Further development of vocabulary and children’s identification and recollection of the difference between sounds.

Turn a box on its side with the opening facing away from the children. One by one place between four and six familiar noisy items (e.g. a set of keys, crisp packet, squeaky toy) into the box, pausing to name them and demonstrate the sound each one makes. Sing to the tune of ‘Old MacDonald’ but using your own name or one of the children’s: “Mrs... has a box, ee, i, ee, i, o. And in that box she has a...” and then stop, gesture and ask the children to listen.

Handle one of the objects in the box, out of sight, to make a noise. The children take it in turns to guess what is making the sound. Continue the song but imitating the sound using your voice: “With a zzz, zzz here and a zzz, zzz there...”. Allow the children to take a turn at making a noise from inside the box and use their names as you sing.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- describe what they see;
- identify the animals and imitate the sounds;
- add new words to their vocabulary.

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Describe and Find It

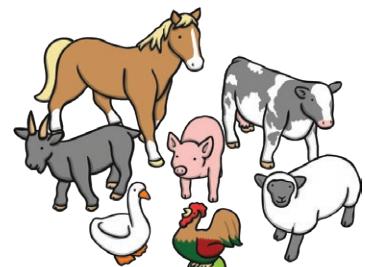
Listening and Remembering Sounds – Further development of vocabulary and children's identification and recollection of the difference between sounds.

Set up a model farmyard. Describe one of the animals but do not tell the children its name. Say, for example, this animal has horns, four legs and a tail. Ask them to say which animal it is. Ask them to make the noise the animal might make. When they are familiar with the game, let individual children take the part of the adult and describe the animal for the others to name. This activity can be repeated with other sets of objects, such as zoo animals, toy sets based on transport (e.g. aeroplane, car, train, bus, boat) and musical instruments. It can be made more challenging by introducing sets of random objects to describe and name.

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- describe what they see;
- identify the animals and imitate the sounds;
- add new words to their vocabulary.



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Socks and Shakers

Talking About Sounds–To make up simple sentences and talk in greater detail about sounds.

Partially fill either opaque plastic bottles or the toes of socks with noisy materials (e.g. rice, peas, pebbles, marbles, shells, coins). Ask the children to shake the bottles or socks and identify what is inside from the sound the items make. From the feel and the sound of the noisy materials encourage the children to talk about them. Ask questions, such as where might we find shells and pebbles?

Assessment Prompts – Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- identify different sounds and place them in a context;
- identify similar sounds;
- make up sentences to talk about sounds;
- join in the activities and take turns to participate.

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Favourite Sounds

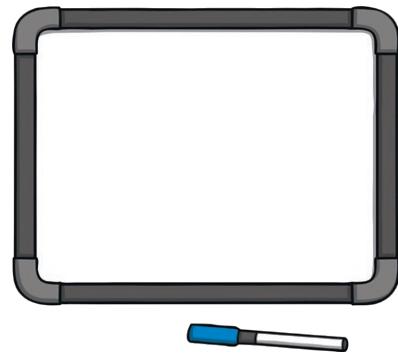
Talking About Sounds-To make up simple sentences and talk in greater detail about sounds.

Make a poster or use a whiteboard for the children to record their favourite sounds pictorially. Invite them to put their sounds in order of popularity and talk about the ones they like the best. Ask the children to think about sounds that they do not like (e.g. stormy weather, barking dogs, car horns, crying babies) and to say why.

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- identify different sounds and place them in a context;
- identify similar sounds;
- make up sentences to talk about sounds;
- join in the activities and take turns to participate.



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Enlivening Stories

Talking About Sounds-To make up simple sentences and talk in greater detail about sounds.

Involve the children in songs and stories, enlivened by role play, props and repeated sounds, for example acting out:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall (bump, crash, bang!)

All the King's horses and all the King's men (gallop, gallop, gallop)

Couldn't put Humpty together again (boo, hoo, boo, hoo, boo, hoo).

Assessment Prompts - Look, Listen and Note

Look, listen and note how well children:

- identify different sounds and place them in a context;
- identify similar sounds;
- make up sentences to talk about sounds;
- join in the activities and take turns to participate.

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Considerations for Practitioners

- Use picture or symbol prompts to remind the children how to be a good listener. These could be displayed on the wall, on a soft toy or in a quiet listening den.
- As with all listening and attention activities, it is important to be aware that a busy environment can really hinder a child's ability to tune in. Keep a listening area free from overly distracting wall displays, posters and resources in order to support very young children or those who find it hard to focus on listening.
- A small group size is preferable, to allow all of the children to have sufficient time to participate in and respond to the activity.
- Using gestures, such as a finger to the lips alongside 'shhh' and a hand to the ear alongside listen, will give vital clues to children who have difficulty with understanding or those who find it difficult to listen to the spoken instruction alone.
- Scan the group before giving any sound cue. Use a child's name if necessary then make the sound immediately that you have their attention.
- If parents or carers speak languages other than English, find out the word for 'listen' in the school community languages and use it when appropriate.



Considerations for Practitioners – continued

- If the children seem to recognise an object, but can't recall its name, help them by prompting with questions, such as: What would you do with it? Where would you find it?
- As you lead the singing, take care to slow the song down. Slowing the pace can make a huge difference, helping children to understand the language used as well as giving them time to prepare and join in with the words or sounds.
- Forget conventional sound effects. For example, dogs don't always bark woof. Big dogs can sound like "WUW, WUW, WUW" and little ones give a squeaky "rap, rap". Vary the voice to add interest. These sounds are often more fun and even easier for the child to attempt to copy. Be daring. Include some less conventional animals (e.g. a parrot, a wolf) and see what sounds you come up with. You might include dinosaurs – many children love them and no one knows what noises they made so children can be as inventive as they like.
- Where parents or carers speak languages other than English, find out how they represent animal noises. Are woof, meow and quack universal? Which examples from other languages are the most like the real sounds?