

## TELEPHONE TRAINING

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For children who are hearing impaired to be able to talk on the telephone there are a number of prerequisite skills necessary to achieve success.

1. **Age or maturity level:** Most children 5 and under do not have the understanding and patience to wait to listen to the phone. They will say a few words but forget about the communicating aspect. Let them answer the phone, try to listen and pretend to chat to someone before you take over the phone. This is much like the parent of a child with normal hearing would do.
2. **Auditory memory:** A child needs to be able to perform about a three item level or their language level may be too limited to understand.
3. **Experience in listening to a tape recorder:** Without this they don't know where the voice is coming from and they may become discouraged.
4. **Motivation:** A child needs to have a desire to talk on the telephone. They need to have an attitude that they want to and can learn to hear on the telephone.

### HOW TO BEGIN:

Begin with taped instructions to practise listening to voices that are not live. In recording:

- Cue a child to listen before you record your phrase on the tape recorder.
  - Say a word with a leader phrase, such as “Where’s the key?”
  - Ensure that the information is acoustically variable initially.
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1. Begin with a closed set - objects on the table in front of the child. Practise a one-item memory by repeating the item a few times. “Show me the frog that goes hop, hop, hop.”
  2. Expand to a two-item memory with a variety of sentence structures. “Find four apples, or “Get your shirt and jacket.”
  3. Ask questions about a picture or photo, e.g., “Which one has something sticky in it?”
  4. Move onto three to four item directions.
  5. Tell short stories and ask questions on tape.
  6. Read books that you have pre-recorded on tapes with questions, comments and observations. To signal a turn of a page you could record the sound of knocking on the table.

Begin telephone practice in the same way as you did the tape practice.

1. Have two lines or a phone in another room.
2. Do not start by using a mobile phone, as the lines may not be clear enough. A Speakerphone works well.
3. Be aware of the acoustics of the room.
4. You will need at least one other person with the child to help relay information as to whether or not the child is hearing and understanding and indicating as such.
5. Have a set of toys or written information to the child to follow requested directions.

**On the telephone, go through the sequence used for the tape recorder with closed set information. When the child follows directions and has experienced success, you are ready to try some semi open set on the phone.**

- 1. Decide on a topic ahead of time.**
- 2. Have the child ask questions to ensure predictable answers. For example, going to buy some ice cream, arranging a time to meet a friend.**
- 3. Practise telling people how they can be clearer, such as, "Slow down please", "Can you say that again?" "A what is very expensive?"**
- 4. Play board games on the phone, such as, tic-tac-toe, telling phone numbers, answering questions that the students asks reading from a slip of paper.**
- 5. Practise only with people who know how to make speech audible for the deaf child to ensure success until he is really comfortable.**

**Then move onto change of topic and pure open set.**

**Strategies to use when child is having difficulties:**

- 1. Use repetition. Use confirmation strategies such as, "Listen again."**
- 2. Rephrase your sentence and repeat original with it.**
- 3. Use "yes", "no" and "I don't know" answers and "say it again". If the child is having trouble hearing those answers you can make it easier by saying "yes", "no-no" and "I don't know," so they vary in duration. Teach child to verify what he hears. This can be done through sentence completion; "Dad went where?" "It was what colour?"**
- 4. If a change in topic occurs that he cannot understand use the spelling strategy. First the child needs practice in saying letters and knowing which letters could be mistaken, as they sound similar. For example, naming [g] could be heard as [e, b, c, or d] as the vowel sounds the same. Give additional information by saying, [b] as in [abc] and emphasize the [b]. If the child says [e], you say no-no. Child tries [b], yes. Next letter, [l], yes. [o] yes. And often they will say the word before you finish spelling it because of context.**
- 5. Can also use the more common "B as in Bob" technique but this may be more difficult to hear.**

**Give lots of encouragement at all times, it is a challenging task. Ensure success by starting at the easiest level and when a child is experiencing problems, go back a stage. Children will have varying levels of skill; some will be independent on the phone and others only comfortable with a few familiar people. Motivation and confidence may influence his success level. Often skills improve when the individual with hearing loss leaves home and want the phone to communicate so motivation is high. Email has certainly assisted in these challenges of communication.**