

Auditory and Visual Discrimination Difficulties and Activities to Develop and Strengthen *From A-Z of Special Needs for Every Teacher*

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Auditory discrimination is the ability to detect similarities and differences when listening to sounds.

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may have:

problems identifying speech sounds
poor listening skills, especially when there is background noise
difficulty discriminating between similar words
difficulty with rhyming activities
poor articulation of sounds and words
kinaesthetic strengths (and learn better through using concrete materials and practical experiences)
visual strengths (and enjoy learning through using visual materials such as charts, maps, videos, demonstrations)
good motor skills (and have strengths in design & technology, art, PE and games)

Activities to develop auditory discrimination skills:

Listening 1 – listen to sounds on CD, then ask the pupils to:

- 1 point to a picture of the object making the sound and name it
- 2 point to a real object that makes the sound and then try it out.

Listening 2 – listen to the sound of real objects with eyes closed. Children guess and name.

Sound bingo – listening to sounds on tape and covering the correct picture.

Sound walk – pupils drawing pictures or writing down the names of the sounds they hear on the walk.

Grouping sounds – animals, musical instruments, vehicles, etc.

Odd one out – ask the pupils to identify the sound that is not part of a group of sounds, eg. dogs barking, pig grunting, cow mooing, musical instrument playing.

Musical discrimination – discriminating between loud/quiet, high/low, fast/slow notes. This should be part of a music lesson – ask a TA to observe.

Clapping or tapping rhythms – you can use pupils' names and polysyllable words. This activity can be linked with picture-noun recognition. Pupils can work in pairs, using picture-noun cards – take turns to clap syllable beats and choose the picture-noun card to match the number of beats.

Same/different 1 – ask the pupils to listen to sets of two everyday sounds and identify those that are the same and those that are different.

Same/different 2 – ask the pupils to listen to sets of two words and identify those that are the same and those that are different, eg. bat/bat, bat/bet.

Same/different 3 – ask the pupils to listen to sets of two words and identify those that rhyme and those that don't, eg. cat/mat, bed/bud.

Hands up 1 – ask the pupils to put up their hands when they hear a particular sound (sounds given one at a time).

Hands up 2 – ask the pupils to put up their hands when they hear a particular sound against a background of other sounds (figure/ground auditory discrimination).

Who is it? – choose a pupil to be blindfolded, then ask another pupil to say a short sentence. Ask the blindfolded pupil to identify the other pupil by name,

Sound bingo – discriminating between initial sounds.

Rhyme time – ask the pupils to listen to a word. If it rhymes with the word that they have in their hand then they can keep it. The winner is the first person to collect five rhyming words.

Visual discrimination is the ability to recognise similarities and differences between visual images.

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may:

be unable to identify shades of colour and texture in pictures
confuse shapes and symbols in maths
confuse letters, words and objects that look similar
reverse numbers and letters when writing
have problems with learning sight vocabulary
find simple scanning activities difficult (eg. wordsearches, dictionary work, using an index)
have problems with comparative language (eg. taller than, shorter than, longer than)
have difficulty completing jigsaw puzzles
have problems with copying from the board
prefer to use multisensory strategies when learning
work with small amounts of visual material at a time
predominantly use phonic strategies when reading.

Activities to develop visual discrimination skills:

Sorting – colour, shape, size and texture.
Post-a-shape – matching shapes to the correct opening.
Matching silhouettes 1 – pictorial.
Matching silhouettes 2 – shapes.
Pairs 1 – matching objects, shapes and pictures.
Odd one out 1 – colour, shape, size.
Odd one out 2 – pictorial (apple, orange, banana, cup).
Pairs 2 – matching letters, using a choice of only four to six at first. try to avoid the letters that are easily confused like b, d and p. Introduce those letters gradually.
Pairs 3 – matching numerals, using a choice of only four or five at first.
Matching sequences – colour, shape and size.
Spot the difference – searching for visual similarities and differences between two pictures.
Mix and match – making three-part flip-books where heads, bodies and tails of animals can be interchanged.
Match the detail – matching a picture of a detail (such as a window) to the picture from which the detail comes (such as the house that has that window).
Shapewords – matching high frequency words to a shape outline.
Snap – matching a range of pictorial cards.
Lotto – matching word to word.
Dominoes – matching picture to picture or word to word.
Words to sentence matching.
Spot the difference – searching for visual similarities and differences in words.
Letter change (eg. cat, cot, cut).
Onset change (eg. sent, tent, went).
Odd word out – both oral and written (eg. hand, land, lend, stand).
Pelmanism 1 – rhyming picture pairs.
Pelmanism 2 – rhyming word pairs.
Wordsearches – using high frequency words or rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to be aware of sounds within words and to be able to break down words into syllables and into phonemes.

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may have:

problems identifying syllables in polysyllabic words
problems recognising rhyming words
difficulty in generating rhyme
difficulty identifying initial, medial and final phonemes in words
difficulty with phoneme blending
visual strengths (learning better from charts, diagrams, videos, demonstrations and other visual materials)
a good visual memory (being able to visualise information and present it in the form of mindmaps, diagrams, charts, posters, illustrations)
kinaesthetic strengths (learning better through using concrete materials, practical experiences and multisensory techniques).

Activities to develop phonological awareness:

Syllable count – say the word (eg. yesterday), then use fingers to count the syllables (yes/ter/day).
Finish the name – adult to say the first syllable of a two syllable name (eg. Hen...), then ask the pupil to complete it (Henry).
Finish the word – adult to say the first syllable of a two syllable word (eg. zeb...) then ask the pupil to complete it (zebra).
I spy 1 – initial sounds (everyday items in the classroom).
I spy 2 – initial sounds (pictorial choice).
Pairs – matching pictures to initial sounds.
Bingo – matching pictures to initial sounds.
I spy 3 – 'I went to the zoo/park/seaside and saw something beginning with...' (initial sounds).
(initial sounds).
Sound/picture mapping – match picture to sound by drawing lines.
I spy 4 – initial CV (consonant-vowel) blending (I am thinking of something beginning with ca...).
Pelmanism – matching pictures to initial CV.
Missing vowels – helps the pupils to become aware that there could be more than one choice of vowels for each word (eg. bt – bat, bet, bit, but).
Line-links – ask the pupils to draw lines to link initial sounds to rhyme endings (eg. b-ed/r-ed, m-an/c-an).
Rhyme wordsearches.
Rhyme pelmanism 1 – pictorial.
Rhyme pelmanism 2 – words.
Rhyme families 1 – collect rhyming pictures ('Can I have a picture that rhymes with...').
Rhyme families 2 – collect rhyming words ('Can I have a word that rhymes with...').
Rhyming cloze (oral) – using traditional rhymes, action rhymes, songs and jingles.
Blends and ends – matching initial consonant blends to rhyme endings (eg. bl-ack/tr-ack).
Dominoes – using blends and ends.
Tongue twisters – initial sounds and consonant blends (eg. six silly swans swam out to sea).
Odd word out – both oral and written (eg. ring, sing, song, thing).
Sense or nonsense – ask the pupils to identify the words that make sense by blending the phonemes (eg. brick, quick, stick, smick, trick).
Compound word pairs – collect word pairs (eg. sea/side, tea/bag).
Syllable sort – collect syllables to form polysyllabic words (eg. yes/ter/day, af/ter/noon).

Auditory memory is the ability to recall information that has been given orally.

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may have:

an inability to retain more than one or two items of information from a lesson presented orally

difficulty recalling information after a period of time, unless given specific support strategies

difficulty in recalling information in the correct sequence

visual/spatial strengths (learn better from charts, diagrams, videos, demonstrations and other visual materials)

a good visual memory (be able to visualise information and present it in the form of mindmaps, diagrams, charts, posters, illustrations)

kinaesthetic strengths (learn better when actively involved in a lesson through movement and touch).

Activities to develop auditory memory:

Repeat and use information – pupils could be asked to repeat a sequence of two or three colours and then thread beads or arrange cubes using that sequence. The pupils could also complete card number sequences in the same way.

Reciting – action rhymes, songs and jingles. Use the actions to aid the recall of key learning points.

Memory and sequencing songs – songs like Old Macdonald, Ten Green Bottles, One Man went to Mow.

Story recall 1 – retell the main events of a story, using puppets and background scenery as cues.

Story recall 2 – draw the main events in well-known, patterned stories (eg. Little Red Hen, The Gingerbread Man).

I went to market and I bought... – using real shopping items or pictures. Pupils have to recall the sequence of items bought.

Recall simple sequences – of personal experiences and events and share with the group or class.

Recall verbal messages 1 – containing one or two elements and requiring a yes or no reply.

Recall verbal messages 2 – containing one or two elements and requiring a simple sentence reply.

Instructions – recall and repeat task instructions containing one, then two, then three elements.

Drawing 1 – story sequences from memory.

Drawing 2 – the sequence of a simple activity.

Explain – the sequence of a simple activity.

Recall – days and events of the week.

Alphabet sequences – dot to dot, games and puzzles.

Alphabet name game – recall the sequence of the alphabet using names.

Alphabet word game – recall the sequence of the alphabet when using simple word banks.

Draw a time sequence – flow chart of the main events in the story.

Organise sentences – in the correct sequence, relating to a school event, using words and phrases that signal time as cues (eg. after that, next).

Mind-maps – show the pupils how to use mind-maps to aid recall of key information.

Visual memory is the ability to recall information that has been presented visually.

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may:

- have immature drawing skills (drawings lack detail)
- have problems with learning sight vocabulary
- have difficulty with letter and number orientation
- find reading music difficult
- be unable to recall patterns, shapes and designs
- have spelling difficulties
- enjoy using multisensory strategies when learning
- use audio to aid recall of information
- have strengths in logic, verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills
- have kinaesthetic strengths (learn better when actively involved in a lesson through movement and touch).

Activities to develop visual memory

Recall object features – let the pupils look at an object and talk about its features. Then take the object away and ask them to recall some of its features.

Recall picture details – let the pupils look at a picture and talk about the details. Then take the picture away and ask them to recall some of the details.

Complete the shape – show the pupils a shape and then give them an incomplete drawing of the same shape. Ask the pupils to complete the shape from memory.

Complete the picture – show the pupils a simple picture and then give them an incomplete drawing of the same picture. Ask them to complete the picture from memory.

What's missing? – show the pupils two similar pictures and ask them identify what is missing from one of the pictures.

Kim's game – place some everyday objects on a table. Show them to the pupils for about a minute, then cover them and see how many each can recall. This can also be played by taking one object away and asking the pupils to identify the object that is missing.

Pelmanism – shapes, objects, animals, etc.

Cause and effect – pictorial visual memory sequence.

Recall and sequence 1 – a series of three to four coloured shapes.

Recall and sequence 2 – a series of three to four pictures (eg. everyday situations, life sequences).

Recall and sequence 3 – a series of four pictures (telling a story).

What happens next? – complete pictorial action sequences related to everyday situations.

Recall and sequence 4 – a series of three to four words in a sentence.

Recall and sequence 5 – the alphabet, using magnetic letters.

Recall and sequence 6 – the days of the week using magnetic words.

Recall and sequence 7 – magnetic numbers.

Word bingo – simple high frequency words.

Visual memory spelling games – using the look, cover, remember, write, check strategy with simple high frequency words.