

What are auditory processing needs?

For a child/ young person with auditory processing needs, the brain doesn't recognise and interpret sounds correctly especially the sounds that make up speech. Your child/ young person may appear to have an auditory deficit, but in most cases, hearing is not the problem. It's like there's a disconnect somewhere between the ears and the brain. Your child/ young person can hear what you say; but they just can't always process it.

A learner with auditory processing needs is like an old computer with a fast, new processor. Neither the old computer nor the learner can keep up. The data goes in, but once it's in, it can't be processed quickly enough or efficiently enough. In both cases the result is major frustration.



If you notice that your child/young person is not able to hear as well as you would expect them to, then please speak to your child's G.P. (doctor) so that any medical needs can be ruled out or investigated further if required.

If your child/ young person has a Speech and Language need then please speak to their teacher and/or School Sendco about this, who may then refer them to the Speech and Language Team.



What can auditory processing needs look like?

The symptoms of auditory processing difficulties can range from mild to severe and will look different from child to child. A child/ young person who has auditory processing needs may display some or many of the following characteristics:

- May struggle to hear in crowded, noisy places.
- Might find it hard to process information in a busy environment.
- May frequently ask you to repeat yourself.
- May appear to be 'switched off' or may be easily distracted.
- Might persistently have difficulty following instructions
- May have noticeable speech difficulties.
- May seem to have heard you when they haven't



What can families do to help?

- Reduce background noise as much as possible
- If you can, speak with them in a quiet, distraction free space.
- Make sure they are looking at you when you are speaking.
- Use short simple sentences if they are finding it hard to follow.
- Speak at a slightly slower rate and at an increased volume.
- Pause frequently if you are speaking to them for a longer time.
- Reinforce instructions. Difficulty with following instructions is possibly the single most common need. Ask your child/ young person to repeat the instructions back to you aloud and to keep repeating them aloud (or to themselves) until the instructions are completed. Make certain they understand the instructions and are not just repeating your words. For instructions that are to be completed at a later time, writing notes, wearing a watch and maintaining a predictable routine in your household can also help.



- Help your child/ young person to be organised, at home and at school.
- When possible, use pictures/ visual support (such as a visual timetable for school). Put these up where they can see them.
- Simplify your language if your child/ young person doesn't understand you.
- Give them your full attention when communicating and listen carefully.
- Avoid speaking to your child/ young person from a different room
- Allow them extra time to process what has been said, and then to think of their answer.
- Try not to talk for or pre-empt your child (such as finishing sentences or filling in gaps for them).
- If they are upset, frustrated or overwhelmed communicate with as few words as possible. At this point they will be finding it even harder to process what you are saying.



Some practical suggestions for supporting learning at home:

- Allow downtime after school before completing any homework. Many children/ young people need to decompress after being overloaded all day at school, especially after taking in lots of auditory information throughout the school day.
- Set a time each day to complete any homework with your child. Try to make this a time when they are not tired or distracted.
- Gain their visual and auditory attention before communicating.
- Start with shorter bursts of work and gradually increase the time on task.
- Give short and simple directions.



- Understand that your child may hear inconsistently depending on their level of tiredness. Try to be patient and don't assume they are intentionally ignoring you.
- If a task is too difficult for them, simplify it if possible or move on to something easier.
- Encourage your child to use practical/ visual resources (where possible) to complete difficult tasks.
- Keep your expectations reasonable, for you and your child/ young person.
- Use a lot of positive reinforcement and praise, even for small efforts and achievements.



- Slow your rate of speech and pause between each sentence if they are struggling to understand you.
- Allow your child/ young person extra time to organise their thoughts and process information.
- If possible, create a quiet place for your child/ young person to complete any homework, away from doors, windows and noisy family members.
- Little and often, read aloud to your child and discuss what you have read. This is really helpful, even for older pupils, as it will support their processing, understanding and memory skills.

