

Simple Activities to Exercise Your Child's Short Term Auditory Memory

Compiled by Julie Shepherd Knapp, copyright 2005, 2007

Some simple activities that help your child practice short term auditory memory skills...

Try to present these activities to your child as fun, low-pressure games. Many of the games can be played casually -- in the car, or standing in line, or as part of a bedtime routine. Take turns playing and being "It" with your child. Be sure to make mistakes yourself -- to keep your child from being disheartened, and because children learn by observing as well as by doing. (Plus, it's no fun to play with someone who never loses. ;-)

Some children have a particularly hard time with auditory activities. A child who often misunderstands verbal directions, has trouble telling the difference between letter sounds, or finds it hard to focus on someone speaking when there is background noise may actually have a problem with auditory processing. If you think there might be a problem you may want to seek out a specially trained audiologist for an assessment. See the [Homeschooling with Auditory Processing Disorder](#) for more information.

These Beginning Level games and activities build in difficulty, from easy to hard. They gradually strengthen a child's ability to focus on what is heard, to notice detail, and to discriminate different sounds. The Advanced games and activities (in the next section) put these skills to use and incorporate strategies to help store multiple items in auditory short-term memory.

Play each game on the Beginning Level list, in the order given -- the skills build on each other. Keep playing them until your child finds the games too easy or gets bored with them, then move on. When done, move on to the Advanced Level.

Beginning Level Activities:

- 1 Singing in your Head
- 2 Tap Counting
- 3 Rhythm Repeat
- 4 That's Silly
- 5 We Got the Beat
- 6 Dueling Tones
- 7 Simon Says
- 8 Simon

Game Descriptions

1. Singing in Your Head

Choose a children's song with actions, such as "Itsy-Bitsy Spider", and join your child in singing the song – first out loud, then silently, in your heads, while still doing the actions. Do this with as many songs as you can. This helps a child develop internal rehearsal skills, which are helpful for short-term memory.

2. Tap Counting

Tap a pencil on a table, have the child tell you how many taps (beats) he heard. Start with three slow beats. Show how to count out loud along with the taps, then show how to count them silently, in your head. Take turns beating/giving answers. When child catches on, add more beats. Have him make taps while you count, too.

3. Rhythm Repeat

Tap or clap a short rhythm pattern for your child to repeat (such as – two slow claps, then two fast claps). When your child catches on, vary the timing and loudness of taps to make new rhythm patterns. Let her "challenge" you to do hard patterns she thinks up.

4. That's Silly

Take turns making statements that have a silly mistake in them, such as "The dishwasher washes clothes", or "Horses have four wheels", or "The radio was too loud, so I turned it up". You can play this as a game... or just do it randomly -- for a humorous touch. (When it's your child's turn to make up a sentence, be sure to "miss" some of the mistakes to make it more fun ;-)

5. We Got the Beat

Have child find the beat in popular music, and tap or clap to the basic rhythm. Begin with a bold, song with a steady beat (such as "We Got the Beat" by The Go-Go's). Help your child find more complicated beats (within the same song and in new songs) to clap to. (Be sure to have played Count-the-Beat and Rhythm Repeat before playing this game)

6. Dueling Tones

Play Rhythm Repeat on a piano, keyboard, or xylophone. First, create a rhythm for the child to copy using only a single note. Then make a rhythm using two notes. Move on to using more notes and varying the timing. Take turns making the rhythms.

7. Simon Says

This is the classic game where the person who is "It" calls out directions that must be followed. The player(s) must be careful to only comply when the directions are prefaced by the phrase "Simon Says". For, example, if the direction, "Simon Says touch your nose" is given, the players must touch their noses. If the direction, "Jump up and down" was given, the players are supposed to stand still, because "It" didn't say, "Simon says jump up and down". If your child has unusual difficulty remembering to do only what "Simon Says", and becomes disgruntled from forgetting this rule, change or eliminate the rule. Not responding when directions are given requires a lot of impulse control, and your child may need another year before he or she is ready for that rule.

Try to include directions that involve both sides and the whole body, such as, "Touch your ear. Now, with the same hand, touch your other ear" "Use your right hand to touch your left knee", "Stand like a teapot" (one hand on hip, other in the air), "Crawl like a puppy", "Do 3 jumping jacks".

8. Simon

A popular battery-powered toy that plays a series of tones and colors.

Child repeats the patterns played by the toy. This is a fast-moving, stressful game. Some children may prefer to watch you play it and make mistakes. See if they can tell you where you went wrong. Note how many tones a child can memorize after playing a time or two. This number should improve with practice. Note that the coordinated colored lights also make this game good practice for short-term visual memory.

If you can't buy or borrow a Simon game here is a free [online Simon game](#) you can use.