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Johnny Never Listens! Helping Students with Listening Comprehension Learning Disabilities

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A learning disability in listening comprehension affects a child's ability to process auditory information, or information that is heard. Children with deficits in listening comprehension might :

- have difficulty following directions
- ask someone to repeat what was said
- be easily distracted in background noise
- have trouble following conversations and details of what was heard

- have trouble learning songs or nursery rhymes
These children have to work extra hard at comprehending what they hear. Fortunately, there are steps teachers may take to help these students succeed in the classroom (Note: If the child is having difficulty listening, it is important to have the child's hearing checked to rule-out a hearing loss.).



Seat students with listening comprehension learning disabilities near the teacher. This enables the teacher to give visual cues to the student.



Use cues to secure the student's attention when beginning to give directions or reading aloud. For example, the teacher may clap his/her hands twice to signal oral directions. The teacher and student need to agree on the signal prior to its use.



Ask the student to rephrase directions in his/her own words to ensure understanding prior to beginning a task. For example, the teacher may ask Johnny, "Will you please tell me in your own words what you are going to do for math today?"



Speak and read clearly in a normal tone and at a moderate pace. Encourage other students in the class to do this to the best of their ability, as well.



Provide the student with an outline and vocabulary lists prior to introducing a new concept or unit.

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(cont.)



Provide the student with study guides prior to beginning test review sessions. Make study guides available for students several days before the test.



Frequently repeat and summarize important information presented orally. For example, "Let me repeat that. On July fourth, Americans celebrate Independence Day."



Always give directions in a written, as well as oral format.



Keep directions concise and simple. For example, "Write your name at the top of the paper."



Give directions in sequential steps. Allow the student to finish one step before giving directions for another step. For example, "First, number your paper one through ten." (Wait for student to finish). "Now, put a period after each number."



Focus on the student's strengths when presenting lessons. Most students with listening comprehension difficulties possess visual strengths. In other words, they learn best visually.



For example, when teaching spelling, the teacher should read the word aloud while the student focuses on the word. Then, the student should study the word by reading it, spelling it, and reading it again. The student should then close his/her eyes and attempt to spell the word orally twice without a model. Finally, the student should attempt to write the word without a model.

If presenting a lecture, provide the student with a copy of written notes.



Encourage students to ask questions to clarify information.



Many students with listening comprehension difficulties experience anxiety when answering questions in class. They realize that they have difficulty following along and might not know the answer. One way to alleviate this anxiety is to privately decide on a cue with the student. For example, when you are getting ready to ask him/her a question, lightly tap on his/her desk. This signals to the student that he/she must be ready to listen carefully because a question is coming.

References

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