

INTRODUCTION

Listen, My Children, and You Shall Hear (3rd edition) is a revision of a classic collection of stories and exercises designed to help children develop listening skills, auditory memory, vocabulary, and imagination. Although research continues to emphasize the importance of good listening comprehension skills as the foundation for strong oral and written language, listening remains one of the most neglected areas of instruction. Employers consistently rank listening as a critical skill needed for success in the workplace (Mendelson & Rubin, 1995). In an effort to address these issues, recent proposals for a new national curriculum stress the importance of direct teaching and frequent practice of effective listening skills and techniques (Mendelson & Rubin, 1995; Secretary's Commission, 1991).

This edition of *Listen, My Children, and You Shall Hear* improves on the original by combining all of the activities into a single, comprehensive volume. Stories have been updated, and a reproducible form for tracking progress is provided in the appendix of the book. The first section outlines suggestions for use of the material. This should serve as a launching point for instruction rather than as strict guidelines to follow. Sections 2 through 4 include the progressively longer and more complex stimulus items.

Listen, My Children, and You Shall Hear is designed to give classroom teachers, speech-language pathologists, special educators, and parents an effortless way to incorporate listening improvement activities into each student's schedule.

References

- Mendelson, D. J., & Rubin, J. (Eds.). (1995). *A guide for the teaching of second language listening*. San Diego, CA: Dominic Press.
- The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. (1991). *What work requires of schools: A SCANS report for America 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

This first section of *Listen, My Children, and You Shall Hear* outlines suggestions for use of the material found in this book. It is intended to serve as a launching point for instruction rather than as strict guidelines for implementation. Instructors should feel free to improve and supplement this material with other activities designed to improve and increase awareness of listening skills.

Level Selection

Selecting the proper entry level for each student is important. The material should be challenging but not so difficult that the student is immediately discouraged. After identifying the appropriate grade-level section of the manual, the instructor should begin reading to the student from the reading selections at the “First Level.” If the student can perform at this level without any difficulty, the “Second Level” should be used. If this is too simple, the instructor should move on to the “Third Level.” Once a level is established, it should be used for each story until the student is ready to move to a higher level.

Reading Technique

Specific reading techniques are suggested for use with this program, regardless of auditory skill or level. Each of the stories should be read aloud to the student at a moderate speed. Teachers should try to avoid repetition of any word or segment of the story while reading. All terms should be familiar to the student. For example, if the story refers to a broken arm and a cast, the word *cast* should be explained and discussed if the student has had no experience with broken bones. For the most part, the stories refer to common events, places, and things; however, occasionally an uncommon element has been included and should be used as an opportunity to build vocabulary.

When using this material to improve auditory memory skills, it is recommended that the instructor read no more than three stories during one session. At least a 2-month interval should elapse before



a story is repeated. In this way it is unlikely that the student will memorize a story.

Establishing a Baseline and Tracking Progress

Appropriate scoring methods and session goals should be determined by the instructor, depending on the goals for each student. Instructors should identify individual student goals or count the key elements of each passage before each session. Once a scoring method is chosen, the instructor should adhere to it for the remainder of the training period in order to establish a baseline for student performance and to obtain consistent progress data. A reproducible tracking form for documentation of progress is provided at the end of this manual.

Basic Listening Activity

Teachers should read a selection aloud to the student and ask him or her to recall as much of the story as possible. This may be accomplished at different scoring levels and may include having the student repeat the story verbatim or just recall key facts or elements of each story. To score performance, instructors should calculate the percentage of elements recalled divided by the total elements possible.

Additional Exercises

The material in this book can be used for instruction and practice of a number of different listening skills and difficulty levels. Some ideas are suggested in the following sections.

Auditory Memory

There are many other methods of addressing auditory memory skills, using the material in this manual. For example, ask the student to recall specific elements of the passage in a question/answer

format. Use prompts and cues as necessary, but be sure to note this on the tracking form. Ask questions that include *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, and *Why*. Examples of basic questions forms include, “Who was in the story?” “How did the story end?” and “What do you think happened next?” To address a higher level of auditory memory skill, ask questions regarding specific details about a main character or event. Set up a long-term memory challenge by reading a passage during one session at the beginning of the week. At the end of the week, read the same selection aloud with certain elements missing and then encourage the student to “fill in the blanks” of the passage.

Auditory Perception

Using a radio, television, tape, or CD player, play some music or news in the room at a low level while reading a passage aloud to the student. Tell the student to listen carefully and to be prepared to recall certain parts of the passage. Another method is to read the story while periodically interjecting nonsense words or verbal commands into the sentences (e.g., “The kitten’s fur was so sharp” or “The kitten’s fur was so . . . John, tie your shoe. . . soft and fluffy”). Finally, read a variety of passages with different volume, intonation, and speed, and then ask the student to identify and describe the way each paragraph was read.

Higher Level Processing

After reading a passage aloud, ask the student to predict the outcome. For example, “Bradley and his dad went out to catch a fish for supper. Soon they each had caught a big fish. What happened next?” If the student does not respond, offer a cue or prompt, such as, “Did Bradley catch a bear? Did Bradley’s dad milk the cows?” Another option is to replace some of the elements of a story and have the student predict a logical ending.

Enhancing Language, Vocabulary, and Imagination

Use the material in this book to facilitate language, vocabulary, and imagination. After the student has repeated the selection, the instructor may ask questions such as “What would you do if this were you?” or “Has anything like this ever happened to you?” Occasionally, if the story seems to pertain to the student in some way, the

student's name may be inserted into the text. Students enjoy hearing stories about themselves, and this can be an excellent device to gain their attention and interest. Ask the student to draw a single picture or series of pictures, comic-strip style, illustrating the story. Have one or more students "act out" the sequence of events in a particular passage. Older students can be asked to write a passage from memory. This is an effective way to help students improve their ability to organize thoughts on paper. Occasionally, a student will be able to perform more efficiently on paper than with oral language. If reading abilities are adequate, students can work in pairs, taking turns acting as the instructor and pupil. Both students will benefit from this activity.

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