

What is auditory discrimination?



Auditory discrimination is the ability to hear/listen to the difference between 2 or more different sounds – these could be individual sounds such as ‘k’ and ‘t’, or the sounds as they are used in words, e.g. ‘see’ and ‘bee’. Auditory discrimination is about how the words sound, not how they are written. It involves the child listening to others say the sound/words – the child does not need to say the sound/word.

Why is auditory discrimination an important skill?



Auditory discrimination is a key skill for understanding the different meanings of words that you hear and for helping to develop full use of your speech sound system, e.g. you need to be able to understand that ‘cat’ and ‘bat’ are different words and have a different meaning.

When are these activities useful?



- When your child is having difficulty with using speech sounds accurately.
- When your child is finding saying sounds challenging – listening activities can help to take the pressure away from saying sounds while still working on developing the speech sound system.

What does it mean?



These are some of the words you may see when you are working on auditory discrimination and what they mean:

- Minimal pairs – this term describes pairs of words which have one difference in the sounds that they have,

e.g. ‘bat’ and ‘bad’
‘sun’ and ‘fun’

The difference could be at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the word.

Minimal pairs are often used when working on developing listening skills for sounds using the sound that your child is unable to say alongside the sound they are changing it for,

e.g. If your child is changing ‘c/k’ sounds to ‘t’ sounds and saying ‘tar’ instead of ‘car’, working on listening to the difference between words starting with ‘k’ and ‘t’ sounds is often the first step towards being able to say the sound when talking.