



What does it mean to put 'Audition First?'

It is important that 'audition' is the primary sense used to develop spoken language. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing default to using their visual sense to learn how to speak, however, visuals can only get you so far. There are many features of speech that can only be heard and not seen, such as voicing consonants, inflection and prosody, and nasalisation to name a few. Not to mention that many consonants look the same when lip read. E.g., /m/ and /b/ look the same (lips together) but do not sound the same.

This is why teaching our children to listen to sounds first before seeing them is important. If you give them a visual along with word, they will most likely only focus on the visual.

The important thing to remember is that you need to 'say before doing'. Examples include:

Saying the words or instruction before using the gesture e.g. saying 'give me the toy' and then holding out your hand. Saying 'Push the car down, push!' before pushing the car down a ramp. Saying 'open the door' before opening the door.

Using boxes or bags to hide toys. Describe what is in the box before showing them. E.g. 'Let's go play with some farm animals! I think there are some in that bag. Let me see (looking in the bag)... I see an animal that has two webbed feet and it likes to swim in the water. It also has a beak for a mouth, and has many feathers. This one has brown feathers, but some have yellow feathers....it says 'quack quack!'

Taking attention away from your mouth so they are less likely to lip read. This can be done by:

Having both the parent and child looking at the toy they are playing with in front of them, rather than their mouth. E.g. make the horse go neigh, clip clop clop – parent and child are focusing on the horse

Positioning the bag, box or toy in a way that is hiding your mouth but not muffling the sound. This is a great technique to use when giving descriptions about the toy inside a bag or a box.

Having your child sit on your lap when you are reading books so that you are both facing the book. This also allows you to be in a great position for hearing as your mouth will be close to the microphone in their hearing aid/processor.

Remember that adopting this style requires being mindful about how you play and interact with your child as audition must be at the forefront of your mind. Using these strategies comes with time, but with lots of practice, it will become second nature.