Sounds & action

Songs: these are fun, children enjoy the repetition and they help in the understanding of the meanings of words. Some examples:

• This little piggy.
• Head, shoulders, knees & toes.
• Incy wincy spider.
• The wheels on the bus.
• This is the way we wash our hands/brush our teeth.
• What made that sound? Child closes his/her eyes. Make a noise with a musical instrument, toy, etc. Child has to identify what made the sound.
• Copying rhythms; clapping hands/banging a drum.
• Simon says ... put your hands on your head/stand on one leg.
• What’s missing? 3 or 4 things on the table, take one away
• Giving simple instructions starting with one thing at a time. Build up according to your child’s ability.
• I went for a walk and I saw... /in my bedroom there is a...
Children need to listen to others talk; it needs to be interesting to them.
As with any skill, some children are better listeners than others.

Use a clear voice, good tone and give your child time to respond.
Get his/her attention and try to use the same instruction whenever you repeat a routine.

Activities to encourage listening skills

Play during daily routines
- Bath time, getting undressed, playing in the bath.
- Getting up, getting dressed, talking about clothes, colours.
- Emptying the washing machine/sorting clothes; socks mummy’s, daddy’s, etc.
- Getting ready for nursery. Getting ready to go out.
- Meal times – preparing food, laying the table, washing hands, eating.
- Putting the shopping away.

Join in with your child’s own play
This gives opportunities for him/her to listen and respond to meaningful language.
- Cooking
- Talking on the phone
- Dolls/cars/garages
- Tea sets
- Doctor
- Pretend shop
- Dressing up
- Washing dolly

Helping children to listen well at home and nursery:

Check you have your child’s attention before you speak
- Call his/her name first, then talk.
- Come closer, your voice will be naturally louder, don’t shout.
- Give him/her time to answer.
- Ask if he/she knows what they have to do/ask them to explain it to you. Praise them.
- If possible, sit the child close to the teacher so they can hear and see clearly.
- Face him/her when speaking.
- Lighting should be good.
- Give some visual clues; book, object.

Background noise can make listening difficult
- Turn down the TV/radio when you want to talk.
- Close the door.
- Be aware of noise from the washing machine, etc.
- Be aware of noise from other children, other rooms.