

Auditory Discrimination Activities

Auditory discrimination is the ability to hear and distinguish between environmental sounds and is an essential skill for reading and language development. Use these activities to strengthen children's skills, whether they need more support and practice or are ready for a challenge. Activities are appropriate for children in grades K–2.

I. Identifying Sounds in the Environment

Purpose: *Identify common sounds heard in the classroom*

Materials: *Common classroom materials*

Tell children to close their eyes and listen for a sound you'll make. Then make a sound they would likely hear at school, such as the following:



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| clapping your hands | playing the piano or another instrument |
| tapping your fingers on a desk | blowing a whistle or whistling |
| snapping your fingers | turning on a fan or a computer |
| ringing a bell | running water |
| walking normally across the floor | dropping something |
| stomping or hopping | coughing |
| writing on the board or on paper | sneezing |
| stapling pages together | blowing your nose |
| opening or closing a desk, a drawer, a door, a window | laughing or giggling |
| sharpening a pencil | whispering |
| crumpling or tearing paper | |
| cutting paper with scissors | |

Have children raise their hands when they know what the sound is. If necessary, repeat the sound. Then have everyone or an individual say the answer. Repeat the sound while children watch so they associate the sound with the action. Continue with other classroom sounds. After children know the activity well, invite individuals to make sounds for others to guess.

Variation 1 Repeat the activity, this time making the sounds very loud or very soft. Have children identify the sound and tell if it was loud or soft. Repeat, this time making the sounds from various locations in the room. Have children, eyes still closed, identify the sound and point to where they heard it.

Variation 2 Make or play sounds heard in other environments, such as animal sounds, nature sounds, city sounds, household sounds, sounds of instruments, and so on. You can find audio clips online by searching for *sound effects* or for a specific category of sounds, such as *animal sounds*. Also, on field trips, encourage children to close their eyes and describe what they hear around them.

TIP: Helping children follow oral instructions Some children are easily distracted, have difficulty keeping multiple steps in mind, or lack sufficient vocabulary to understand the directions. Try these techniques:

- Minimize background noise or distractions.
- Get children's eyes on you before you speak.
- Speak carefully and enunciate words clearly.
- Simplify directions and explain essential terms.
- Support oral instructions with visual or written cues.
- Monitor children as they work and give reminders about tasks.

2. Identifying Same and Different Sounds

Purpose: *Distinguish among sounds heard in the classroom*

Materials: *Common classroom materials*

Have children close their eyes. Make two different sounds, such as laughing and clapping. (See Auditory Discrimination Activity 1 for a list of classroom sounds.) Ask if the sounds are the same or different. (*different*) Repeat for other pairs of sounds, sometimes making the sounds the same and sometimes making them different. Have children tell if the sounds are the same or different and identify what the sounds are.



3. Identifying a Sequence of Sounds

Purpose: *Identify and repeat a sequence of sounds*

Materials: *Common classroom materials*

Have children close their eyes. Make or play a series of three or four sounds, such as laughing, clapping, coughing. Call on children to name the sounds you made in the order you made them. Have them repeat the sounds in order. Or have them name the first or last sound in the sequence.

Variation While children have their eyes closed, make or play the same sequence of sounds twice. The second time, leave out one sound. Have children tell which sound was missing.

TIP: Reinforcing sequence words When doing sequence activities, encourage children to describe the order of items using the words *first, next, last*. If they've learned ordinal numbers, have them describe the order of items as *first, second, third*, and so on.

4. Repeating a Rhythm

Purpose: *Identify and repeat a rhythmic pattern of sounds*

Materials: *(optional) Simple music shakers or drums*

Clap out a simple, rhythmic pattern, such as one clap, two quick claps, one clap, two quick claps, and so on. Have children repeat the pattern with you and then continue it by themselves. Ask children to describe or demonstrate the part of the pattern that keeps repeating. Do the same with other rhythmic patterns.

Variation 1 Have children use music shakers or drums to repeat simple rhythms. You can make shakers by filling plastic eggs with dry rice or beans and taping them shut. Any empty container with a lid can be used as a drum.

Variation 2 Sing or play a song children know that has a strong beat, such as "The Ants Go Marching." Have children stamp their feet or clap their hands in rhythm as they listen or sing along.



5. Auditory Discrimination Games

Purpose: *Have fun while practicing auditory discrimination skills*

Materials: *Animal toys or pictures, kitchen timer*

Animal Sounds Display pictures or toy figures of animals children know. Make or play the sound that one of the displayed animals makes—for example, “oink” for a pig. Have children point to and name the animal that makes that sound. Have them say a sentence linking the animal name with its sound—for example, “A pig says ‘oink!’”

Who Said It? Have children close their eyes. Tell them that if you tap one of them on the shoulder that child should say, “I’m in your class. What is my name?” Have others guess who is speaking. Have the child who spoke tap the next child to speak.

Where Is the Sound? Set a kitchen timer for one minute. Have children close their eyes while you hide the timer. Have them open their eyes. Tell them to listen to the ticking and find the timer before it buzzes. Or have one child search for the timer while the other children practice being quiet as mice.

Simon Says “Make This Sound!” Play a version of Simon Says where you tell children to make a sound. If you begin your command with the phrase “Simon says,” children should make the sound. If you don’t begin the command with this phrase, children should do nothing. For more challenge, include a descriptive word that tells children how to make the sound. For example, say, “Simon says to whisper yes quietly.” Other actions could include the following: chew noisily, meow softly, laugh loudly, cough politely (with elbow covering mouth), chuckle cheerfully, hum happily, growl angrily, or yawn sleepily.

Hum That Tune Hum the beginning of a familiar song, such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Have children hum the same notes. Repeat with other parts of the song or other songs. Encourage children to close their eyes to help them listen more carefully.

Odd Sound Out Make or play four sounds, three that belong to the same category, such as the sounds of three different animals or musical instruments, and one sound that isn’t related to the group. Have children identify the sound that doesn’t belong with the others.

