

# Ask “What did you hear?”

**Definition:** When a child gives an incorrect or inappropriate response, no response, or experiences a communication breakdown, the adult can ask, “*What did you hear?*” to prompt the child to give back the part of the message that was heard and attempt to repair the breakdown.

## How is this strategy done?

Often a child with hearing loss falls in to the habit of responding “what?” or “huh?” without the proper auditory attention to the intended message. The purpose of this strategy is for the adult to consider asking “What did you hear?” instead of an automatic repetition of the message.

## Why is this strategy important?

A child is held accountable as a listener when an adult asks “*What did you hear?*” on a regular basis. This practice signals to a child that the adults expects the child to listen and respond. The response the child gives to the adult also reveals information about what the child may or may not have heard. In this way, the adult acts as a diagnostician and has information about which part of the message the child missed or did not understand.

This Auditory Verbal strategy helps build the following Listening and Spoken Language skills:

- ✓ attention to auditory signal and/or speaker
- ✓ confidence in listening skills
- ✓ repair strategies for communication breakdowns

## Discussion

An adult who asks “What did you hear?” sends a message to the child that he is expected to listen and respond. A child does not learn to trust their own hearing when an adult continually repeats a message after the child responds “huh?” or “what?” The child learns that it is not necessary to listen the first time! This strategy also forces the child to think about what was heard and attempt to fill in the blanks of missing information (Estabrooks, Maclver-Lux & Rhoades, 2016).

An adult should invite a child to learn along with them and asking “What did you hear?” also implies “have you been listening and learning alongside me?” Adults make listening an emphasis and hold a child accountable when they ask “What did you hear?” A child will make more of an effort to listen when the adult says something meaningful or motivational to the child (Jalongo, 2008).

Listening and Spoken Language Specialists (LSLS) must be diagnostic in their practice. The LSLS has the opportunity to evaluate what a child may or may not have heard when they ask “What did you hear?” The child may use “huh?” or “what?” to gain additional time to process the auditory information. The response the child gives will assist the LSLS in diagnosing where the child has difficulty and then pinpoint a potential area of need.

Before the use of this strategy, the adult must first take in to account factors such as background noise, distance, and whether the child really just needs to hear the message again before they ask “What did you hear?”. This strategy, when used incorrectly, can create hesitation on the part of the child to respond and negatively affect the child’s self-esteem, so the adult should be careful in the proper timing and use of this strategy. The question should be delivered in an encouraging manner.

## Example

A child is assisting in washing dishes after dinner.

Mom : Was John in school today? I know he was out sick yesterday

Child: What?

Mom assess the environment and realizes that the running water may have affected her son’s ability to hear the complete message. She *does not* ask “What did you hear?”, but makes the decision to repeat the question to her son.

Child: No. He was still sick. Recess was no fun without him.

A child is in a speech session with his speech language pathologist and they are working on auditory memory skills.

Therapist: We are going to pretend to go shopping. I will tell you which items you need to put in the shopping cart. I want you to remember what I say and put the items in the cart. Now, tell me what you will do.

Child: I will listen to food you say. I will put it in the cart.

Therapist: Great! We need bread, pizza, strawberries and ice cream.

Child: Wait. What?

Therapist: What did you hear me ask for?

Child: ummm. Bread, pizza and ice cream.

Therapist: Yes. What else did you hear?

Child: Blueberries?

Therapist makes a note that the child heard ‘berries’, but may have missed the beginning part of the word. She repeats the whole message using acoustic highlighting on the word ‘straw’.

Ask “What did you hear?”

# References

Estabrooks, W., Maclver-Lux, K., Rhoades, E. (2016). *Auditory verbal therapy for young children and their families, and the practitioners who guide them*. San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.

Jalongo, M. (2008). *Learning to listen, listening to learn*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.