



How listener friendly is your classroom?

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A good listening environment is crucial to successful classroom learning. Many factors affect the listening environment. Classrooms are typically noisy and reverberant, making listening difficult for pupils with normal hearing as well as those with hearing loss.

Check your classroom, using the following questions. If you discover that you have a poor listening environment (when no is answered to the following questions), follow the provided tips.

Classroom checklist and useful tips

1. Noise outside the classroom

Yes No

- Is your classroom in a quiet area away from external noise sources (traffic, construction, playground, busy hallways, shops, etc.)?

Tip: Reduce external noise as much as possible by evaluating your classroom location. For a pupil with a hearing loss, choose a classroom located away from traffic and noisy areas. Avoid areas where groups of children congregate. Even simple things like shrubbery just outside the classroom windows can help reduce external noise.

2. Noise inside the classroom

Yes No

- Do you have a quiet classroom without noise sources, such as fans, heating and cooling systems, etc.?
- Is the floor carpeted?
- Do the windows have curtains?
- Do chairs, desks and tables have rubber stops to cut down on noise?

Tip: Evaluate and monitor internal classroom noises on an ongoing basis. Air conditioners, heating systems, computers, projectors and light fixtures can all contribute to internal background noise, making hearing difficult. Most of us simply “tune out” these sounds unconsciously. But for a child with hearing instruments it is not always that easy. Have equipment serviced regularly to eliminate noise created by malfunction. And look for areas where adjustments can be made to improve classroom acoustics:

- Acoustically-treated low ceilings
- Carpeting (floors, and even parts of walls)
- Well-fitting doors
- Thick curtains; acoustic panelling
- Use of absorptive materials on hard reflective surfaces (cork bulletin boards etc.)
- Windows and doors closed during instruction.

3. Listening skills

Yes No

- Do you evaluate listening skills and provide programs to strengthen these skills?
- Do you make listening fun?

Tip: Listening skills can be evaluated in many ways and they can fun. Contact the appropriate staff person in your school regarding the availability of pupil observation forms. Use game-like activities that make your pupils want to listen.

4. Teacher's voice

Yes No

- Are you projecting your voice so that you can be heard in the back of the room?

Tip: Check with pupils periodically to be certain that they can hear you well. Speak clearly, but do not yell. Even though a child may be wearing hearing aids, normal hearing cannot be achieved. Seating hard-of-hearing pupils near the front of the class should be strongly considered, unless FM assistive listening equipment¹ is being used.

5. Teacher's language

Yes No

- When you speak, do you use clear, concise language?

Tip: Use age appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. If new words are introduced, explain them. Avoid excessive use of irony, figurative language and idioms. A child with a hearing loss is often concentrating on the literal translation. If the message is too complicated, pupils won't listen or learn.

6. Communication

Yes No

- Do you ensure that the pupils understand directions, both oral and written?
- Do you use visual aids (video, overheads, etc.)?

Tip: Question pupils regularly regarding their understanding of written and oral directions. Do not assume that these are understood. Ask the pupil to repeat your instructions, rather than simply asking him/her if he/she heard you. Take care not to focus or single out the pupil with the hearing loss too much.

7. Hearing tactics

Yes No

- Is there sufficient light in the room to aid oral communication with lip reading?
- Do you try to talk face-to-face with your pupils?

Tip: A pupil with any type of hearing loss should face away from windows to avoid light shining in his/her face. The face of the speaker should be in good light. Speaking face-to-face enables the listener to utilise visual cues such as lip reading and facial expressions. Speak in a normal tone of voice, without exaggerated lip movements. You should also model good listening habits by really listening to what your pupils are saying and showing interest. Schedule specific times for sharing information and give your full attention.

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Footnote:

1. FM assistive listening equipment is now commonly called **Remote Microphone Systems**

Additional reading

- [Listening fatigue at school](#)

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