

## Auditory Sequential Memory

Practical suggestions for parents compiled by Gap House School

Many children with a history of late speaking and early speech and language difficulties find they reach secondary school age with adequate levels of speech and understanding but residual problems which perhaps only they, their parents and teachers can detect. It is not uncommon for reading and writing difficulties to persist after the speech problem has resolved; the key factor being a limited auditory memory span.

By this stage, memory span is unfortunately unlikely to improve significantly and the children and those around them need to accept the problem and look for ways of compensating for it, rather than hoping to overcome it.

Following Instructions:

Say things more than once, and ask your child to repeat the instruction back to you to make sure they've got it. This will also show you exactly how much they can retain at once, and make you aware of how much to expect.

Help your child by minimising the number of key points they have to remember. Sequence the items clearly and avoid any excess language which only confuses the issue.

Encourage your child to repeat the instruction silently to themselves while on their way to do it.

Use visual imagery to aid recall. For example, if asking your child to buy washing up liquid and toothpaste, feed the gerbils and get the washing in while you're out, make it clear there are 4 things to remember, then get them to imagine a scene where the gerbils are running up and down the washing line, squirting each other with Fairy Liquid and toothpaste! This sounds plain daft, but the effects of visual imagery are very strong and have been proved to aid recall after considerable periods of time.

Mnemonics

- Similarly, mnemonics can be used in a variety of ways:
- Telephone numbers: "31265" 3-my age-my door number.
- A difficult spelling:: "ought" Oswald Usually Grinds His Teeth.
- Visual Aids
- Digital watch with date
- Keep a diary of 'things to remember'.

- Carry a notebook and pencil to jot things down as they crop up. Children cannot rely on their listening memory for homework/ invitations, etc.
- NB A Junior Filofax serves the purpose well and has street credibility!
- The older child might benefit from a pocket dictaphone, particularly if handwriting is a problem.
- Encourage your child to keep a list of vital information handy - personal addresses, phone numbers, dates of birth. It's amazing how one can go blank on these things just at the wrong moment.
- Use maps / diagrams / lists to explain things, rather than giving instructions verbally.
- Whenever possible, get children to make lists out themselves, either by writing or drawing items. Try to turn a 'blind eye' to spelling mistakes What's important is training children to be self-reliant, and of course, the extra effort put in is a further aid to memory. The end product may look messy to you, but will be more meaningful to your child.

#### General

Help your child to understand and accept their problem. Encourage them to say to others "I'm not very good with words. Could you write it down for me please?"

Make sure that everyone involved with your child is aware of their limitations and doesn't dismiss a poor memory as laziness/ inattention (though obviously these factors can play their part too!).

Encourage your child to ask questions if they are not sure of anything, and check that teaching staff are prepared for this. If your child has plucked up courage to ask for repetition or clarification, then it is extremely important that this effort is rewarded by a patient answer. Similarly, your child will need to understand that the teacher may be busy and cannot always drop everything to give an immediate answer, but with will and understanding on both sides, a compromise can be reached.