

## Test Assistant: Play Audiometry

Play audiometry is a technique used to test the hearing of children between the ages of approximately 2 ½ to 5 years. The child responds to sounds using a listening game to find the softest level the child can hear for low, mid and high pitched sounds. Various toys can be used, for example, having the child place a block in a bucket when the sound is heard. For this technique it is helpful to have a test assistant, and this role is often performed by the parent.

The test assistant helps the child learn the listening game. There are two steps, the first step is to help the child get ready to listen. This is often done by having the child hold the response toy up to their cheek until they hear the sound. A hand over hand guided response may be needed at first. The second step is to teach the child to respond only when the sound is heard. Children want to play and need to be reminded to only respond when a sound is heard. This is done by giving the response toy back to the child and asking them to listen again. The goal is for the child to respond on their own without prompting.

The test assistant helps to maintain the child's attention on the task. There are two strategies that help the child to stay engaged in testing. The first is to provide positive reinforcement, such as a smile, a head nod, or even clapping. The extent of the reinforcement needed will vary based on the child's temperament. This helps children feel more comfortable and increases the likelihood that they will cooperate. The second strategy is to change the listening game when the child begins to lose interest. Have two or three games ready so the change can be made quickly. When the game is changed it may be necessary to condition the child with a few guided responses to re-engage the child in the task.

The test assistant helps minimize distractions during testing. Toys should be kept out of reach of the child and out of sight when not in use. People in the testing area can also distract the child. Turn off your cell phone, and bring another adult who can stay with the other siblings in the waiting area. During testing, be aware of your body language, children watch what is happening around them and can be unintentionally cued if you start or stop a movement when a sound is presented.

Play audiometry is a technique that is commonly used for children from 2 ½ to 5 years of age. The parent often performs the role of the test assistant. The test assistant teaches the child the listening game, changes the game if the child loses interest and minimizes distractions in the room.