FLIP

Foundations for Learning Intervention Programme



Tilly's Steps to Attention
Unit guide and overview

An early communication and language intervention programme designed to develop children's listening and attention skills within the EYFS.

6 weeks | 10 minutes a day | 1:1 or small group

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

About Tilly's Steps to Attention



This six-week intervention programme supports Reception children who need additional help to develop their early listening and attention skills.

Listening and attention are the foundations for communication, language and learning. Children need to attend to and make sense of what they hear before they can join in with conversations, follow instructions and learn alongside others. Listening, Attention and Understanding is one of the Early Learning Goals within Communication and Language (Department for Education, 2024).

Early attention skills are closely linked to later learning. Children who can focus and persist with tasks in the early years tend to do better in early literacy and maths, and attention at age four has been linked to educational outcomes into adulthood (Blair & Razza, 2007; McClelland et al., 2013).

Attention develops in stages, from fleeting attention in infancy to the integrated attention children need in the classroom (Cooper, Moodley & Reynell, 1978). Some children need additional, structured practice to move through these stages.

Each week, children join Tilly as she takes her steps to attention. Short, playful sessions are built around familiar listening games, with repetition and gradual progression so that children experience success before moving on to more challenging tasks.

6 weeks
programme length

10 minutes
maximum daily session

1:1 or small group
teacher or teaching assistant

Reception
year group

Communication & Language
EYFS prime area

INTENT

What does the intervention support?

The aim of this intervention is to ensure that all children are supported to:

- ✓ Get ready to listen by looking at the speaker and reducing distractions.
- ✓ Understand and follow a clear start and finish routine.
- ✓ Maintain attention for increasing periods of time.
- ✓ Return their attention to an activity after being distracted.
- ✓ Discriminate between sounds and listen for key information.
- ✓ Hold spoken information in mind and recall what they have heard.
- ✓ Follow 1-, 2- and 3-step instructions in the correct order.
- ✓ Apply their listening and attention skills to games, classroom tasks and everyday learning.

The progression

Each week builds on the last. Children move from **getting ready to listen** and **sustaining attention**, to **noticing** and **remembering** what they hear, **following** increasingly complex instructions and finally **applying** these skills to everyday learning.

DELIVERY GUIDANCE

How to deliver this unit

01

Before you begin

- Use the **Identification and Progression Toolkit** to identify which children should take part and record a baseline.
- Decide whether to deliver 1:1, in pairs or in a small group.
- Set aside a maximum of **10 minutes** daily for **6 weeks**.
- Gather the resources for the week.

02

During the intervention

- Start every session with the **"Looking eyes, listening ears"** chant and actions.
- Gain children's attention before giving instructions, using clear, simple language.
- Allow processing time and praise specific listening behaviours.
- Finish by colouring a set of footprints on the **Steps to attention map**.

03

Monitor progress

- Record observations in the **Practitioner Notes**.
- Keep the **Participation Log** up to date.
- Revisit the **Identification and Progression Toolkit** weekly and record totals at baseline, mid-intervention and completion.

Keep it short: sessions run for a maximum of **10 minutes** daily, delivered **1:1, in pairs or in a small group** by a teacher or teaching assistant. Each week focuses on one step towards attention.

GOOD PRACTICE

Top tips for practitioners

- ✓ Establish a consistent start and finish routine for every session.
- ✓ Use clear, simple language and give children sufficient processing time.
- ✓ Gain children's attention before giving an instruction or important information.
- ✓ Begin with tasks children can complete successfully before increasing the challenge.
- ✓ Use visual supports, gestures, objects and practical activities where appropriate.
- ✓ Repeat and revisit skills regularly rather than introducing new skills too quickly.
- ✓ Praise specific attention and listening behaviours, rather than simply praising a correct answer.
- ✓ Gradually reduce adult prompts and visual supports as children's independence develops.
- ✓ Keep sessions playful, motivating and appropriately paced.
- ✓ Record observations of children's responses to monitor progress and inform the support needed.

A progressive pathway

The programme should be viewed as a progressive pathway rather than a fixed sequence. Children may need additional time on particular steps, and activities can be repeated, simplified or extended according to individual needs. The ultimate aim is for children to transfer the attention and listening skills practised during the intervention into everyday communication, classroom learning and independent participation.

ATTENTION DEVELOPMENT

How attention develops

Children's attention typically develops through six levels (Cooper, Moodley & Reynell, 1978). Ages are approximate and every child develops at their own rate.

LEVEL 1
Fleeting
about 0–1 year

Attention shifts quickly to any new sight, sound or movement.

LEVEL 2
Rigid
about 1–2 years

Concentrates on an activity of their own choosing but finds it hard to accept adult direction.

LEVEL 3
Single-channelled
about 2–3 years

Focuses on one thing at a time and can shift attention to an adult with support.

LEVEL 4
Focusing with support
about 3–4 years

Begins to control their own attention, but still needs to stop and look to listen.

LEVEL 5
Two-channelled
about 4–5 years

Can listen and do at the same time for short periods.

LEVEL 6
Integrated
about 5–6 years

Attention is well established and sustained across contexts, including in a group.

Where does this intervention focus?

Most children in Reception are moving from **Level 4** towards **Level 5**. The programme supports children who are not yet attending in this way to build these skills.

Build focused attention

Weeks 1–2: getting ready to listen, looking at the speaker, ignoring distractions and staying with an activity for longer.

Develop two-channelled attention

Weeks 3–6: listening while doing, noticing and remembering what they hear, following instructions and using these skills in everyday learning.

SIX-WEEK JOURNEY

Six-week programme overview

Join Tilly as she takes her steps to attention. Each week focuses on a particular step.

	FOCUS	SESSION ACTIVITIES
Week 1	**Ready to attend** Children learn to look at the speaker, reduce distractions and follow a clear start and finish routine.	Ready to go!, What's missing?, Attention detectives, Listening freeze, Simon Says
Week 2	**Sustaining attention** Children maintain attention for longer, complete short activities and return their attention when distracted.	Comic book pictures, Special word stories, Copycat, Popcorn, Sounds all around
Week 3	**Listen and notice** Children discriminate between sounds, listen for key information and respond to important words.	Sound detectives, Listen for a clue, Silly sentences, What's changed?, Jokes
Week 4	**Listen and remember** Children hold information in mind and recall words, objects and short sequences they have heard.	Word walk, Shopping list, Who did what?, Remember the actions, Message master
Week 5	**Listen and follow** Children follow 1-, 2- and 3-step instructions, remembering information in the correct order.	Car park, Follow the route, Code breaker, Simon Says, We are builders
Week 6	**Attention for learning** Children apply their listening and attention skills to games, classroom tasks and everyday learning.	Classroom shop, Board games, Paper aeroplanes, Listen and draw, Den building

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Resources: Weeks 1 to 3

Week 1

Ready to attend

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Music player
- ☐ Objects in the room, e.g. book, cup, teddy
- ☐ Beach scene sheet (provided), or a page from Where's Wally?

Week 2

Sustaining attention

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Bell, whistle or musical instrument
- ☐ Comic book pictures (provided)
- ☐ Special word stories (provided)
- ☐ Sounds all around recording sheet (provided)

Week 3

Listen and notice

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Four objects that make a sound (optional, as the sound clips are in the presentation)

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Resources: Weeks 4 to 6

Week 4

Listen and remember

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Resources for a short obstacle course, e.g. cones, hoops
- ☐ Shopping list game (provided)
- ☐ Action cards (provided)
- ☐ Message master cards (provided)

Week 5

Listen and follow

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Toy cars or vehicles in different colours and sizes
- ☐ Colouring pencils or pens
- ☐ Lego, Duplo or Unifix cubes in different colours
- ☐ Car park template (provided)
- ☐ Code breaker sheet (provided)

Week 6

Attention for learning

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase or bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's steps to attention session map (provided)
- ☐ Lesson presentation (provided)
- ☐ Toy till
- ☐ Classroom resources, e.g. pencil, ruler, whiteboard, paintbrush
- ☐ A simple board game, e.g. snakes and ladders
- ☐ Plain paper
- ☐ Pencils and colouring pencils
- ☐ Den building resources, e.g. blankets, chairs, pegs
- ☐ Paper aeroplane instruction sheet (provided)

REVIEW EVIDENCE

Review and next steps

At the end of the **six-week** intervention, review all the evidence gathered during the programme, including the **Practitioner Notes, Participation Log, Identification and Progression Toolkit** records and your daily observations.

Consider

- Can the child get ready to listen and stay focused during an adult-led activity?
- Do they remember and follow 2- and 3-step instructions?
- Do they use these skills independently in the classroom, in play and at group times?
- How consistent are your observations, and what is the child's individual rate of progress?

Deciding what happens next

Sufficient progress

The child no longer requires targeted intervention in this area at this time.

Further cycle

The child would benefit from another cycle of targeted intervention to continue developing identified skills.

Additional concerns

Discuss with the school SENDCo. An Individual Support Plan, further targeted strategies, longer-term monitoring or advice from outside agencies, such as Speech and Language Therapy, may be needed.

IDENTIFY › DELIVER › ASSESS › MONITOR › DECIDE NEXT STEPS