

Module 2: Understanding Hearing: How the Ear Works and How to Test Hearing in Infants

Section: Hearing Tests for Infants and Young Children

Two Categories of Tests

- Objective
- Subjective

Activity 2.1: Supporting Families in Understanding the Various Considerations Related to Evaluating the Hearing Abilities of Infants and Young Children

A. Review the following concepts:

- why hearing screening is important,
- the difference between a screening and a full diagnostic evaluation,
- what a family may be experiencing during the screening and diagnostic evaluation process,
- the rationale behind why it is critical to follow up with all audiological evaluation appointments to obtain a full picture of a child's hearing abilities, and
- the rationale for why early identification and commitment to early intervention is critical to language acquisition.

B. Review the difference between objective tests and subjective tests. Emphasize that objective testing does not require a voluntary response from the child whereas subjective testing does require a response from the child. Review the Module 2 handout, *Testing Hearing in Infants*, and discuss issues related to objective tests (e.g., otoacoustic emission, auditory brainstem response, tympanometry) and subjective tests (e.g., behavioral observation audiometry, visual reinforcement audiometry, play audiometry) as they apply to this child.

C. Discuss the following considerations:

- Many factors can affect a child’s subjective testing sessions, such as a good night’s sleep; a full tummy; and his or her mood, temperament (e.g., shy vs. outgoing), or visual attention (e.g., the child may be focused on visual distractions in the environment rather than attending to the sounds used in the evaluation).
- Ongoing testing—both objective and subjective—is important to obtain information to fit listening technologies, guide language and communication approaches, and monitor possible changes in hearing abilities.

D. Take the following into consideration:

- Families may not be able to follow through with recommended testing in a timely manner despite best efforts. For example, they may need to travel far, wait a long time for an appointment, find the right time to take off from work, or find the resources to cover travel expenses. Sometimes a child’s complicated health issues may prolong getting a good picture of a child’s hearing levels because he or she may not be well enough to participate in hearing evaluations. Regardless of the reason, support these children and families in facilitating their language and other areas of development based on what you know.
- Following through on hearing testing may be a challenge for families who speak a language other than English. Consider working with families to secure interpreting services, if needed, either through the hospital, the audiology clinic, or your early intervention program to make necessary appointments, explain the screening and evaluation process, review what will happen/is happening during the evaluations, and explain test results.

For more information about newborn hearing screening and diagnostic evaluation:

- [Why is Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Important?](#)
- [CDC: Screening and Diagnosis](#)

Developed with [Stacy Abrams](#)