

Attention Builders Intervention

Aims:

- To develop **attention skills** through **fun, predictable and highly motivating activities**

Attention skills include:

- Focusing / **paying attention to an adult-initiated activity**
 - Sustaining attention for **longer**
 - Sustaining attention for a **series of steps**
 - **Shifting attention** to different activities
 - Focusing on an **individual task**
 - Showing **anticipation and curiosity** about what might happen next
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- To encourage **communication and interaction**
 - To practice skills such as **turn taking** and **following instructions**
 - To offer opportunities to **engage in shared attention**

Who is it for?

Attention Builders, also known as Bucket Time, is based on 'Attention Autism' which was created and developed by Speech and Language Therapist Gina Davies. It was originally designed for autistic children and young people but has been widely used and effective with learners who, for various reasons, would benefit from support to develop their attention skills.

Practical Information

Equipment needed:

- ✓ Whiteboard and Pen
- ✓ Bucket and attention grabbing resources
- ✓ A builder's tray, wipeable table mat or shower curtain are highly recommended – this can get messy!
- ✓ Equipment for Stages 2 – 4 (recommendations on each page)

Time needed:

- The intervention lasts between **5 – 20 minutes** depending on how many stages are included.
- Run this intervention between **twice weekly - daily**.
- Baseline assess at the beginning and **review after 6 weeks**.

Number of children:

This depends on the strengths and needs of the pupils involved. We would recommend **between 1 and 5 children**.

Staff needed:

This depends on the strengths and needs of the pupils involved. **At a minimum, one lead adult and one supporting adult**, if children are able to join in relatively independently. However, you may need adults to support children 1:1, in which case, you would need a lead adult and one supporting adult per child. Typically, the number of adults needed will be somewhere in between these ratios.



Guidelines and Tips:

Sessions need to be:

Visual

Exciting! Motivating!

Predictable

As distraction free as possible – the Attention Builders activity should be the only exciting thing in the room - remove other highly distracting resources.

How to be a great supporting adult:

- All adults in the room should be focused on the Attention Builders activity, not doing other things – even if they are helpful, like tidying up!
- Supporting adults are modelling paying attention to the Attention Builders activity by looking at it, listening and joining in – and acting as though it is very exciting! (This is due to ‘Social Referencing’ – children are looking to you to see how to engage and respond).
- Try to stay quiet and use minimal language during the Bucket stage to give space for the children’s reactions and communication: their communication might be very subtle.

How to be a great lead adult:

- Use minimal language, focusing on key words such as naming the objects, and words such as ‘open,’ ‘more,’ ‘again,’ ‘go’ and names of colours, numbers and shapes.
- Make it **MOTIVATING**: Try to be engaging and exciting through your gestures and tone of voice
- Make it **PREDICTABLE**: Use the same songs, the same structure and always use your whiteboard visual schedule
- Build in anticipation: Use lots of pausing, countdowns and facial expressions to build up curiosity about what will happen next or what is in the bucket.

Stages of Attention Builders:

*You can run a session with Stage One to begin with, adding the different stages **as children are ready. Each stage is around 5 minutes.***

1. Bucket [Capture Attention]

This stage aims to focus attention on the adult-initiated stimulus.

2. Attention Builder [Sustain Attention]

This stage aims to elongate children’s attention time, so they focus their attention for longer.

3. Turn Taking [Shift Attention and Take Turns]

In this stage, children shift from paying attention to something as a group, then as an individual, as well as waiting for their turn.

4. Individual Activity [Focus on an independent task and then back to the group]

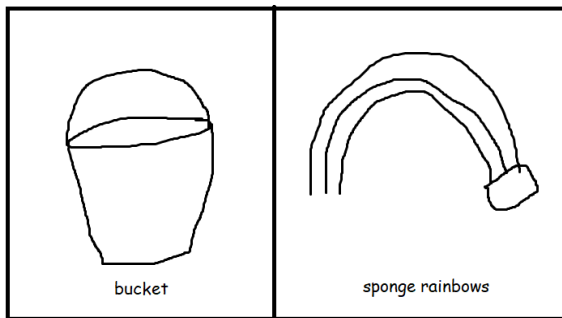
In this stage, an adult models an activity and the children then follow instructions to complete the brief activity themselves, before coming back to share their materials at the end.

Before you start...

... think about how you will communicate it is Attention Building or ‘Bucket Time.’ Have a consistent visual or Object of Reference and add it to your visual timetable. A transition song can be helpful too.

Also think about before and after activities in the timetable.

Stage 1: The Bucket [Capture Attention]



- Your bucket should be full of lots of exciting, visual resources that are very motivating to look at or hear.
1. Draw the bucket on the whiteboard, either on its own if you are just doing Stage 1 or with the 'next' activity if you are doing further stages. Point to it and say 'Bucket Time.'

2.

'I've got something in my bucket,
in my bucket, in my bucket. I've
got something in my bucket, I
wonder what it is?' *Sing this
song for each item.*

3. Pull two – three exciting items out of the bucket in a fun and motivating way.

Guidelines:

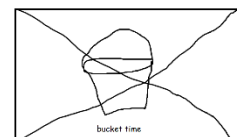
- Make it predictable: always use the whiteboard schedule, the same 'What's in the bucket?' and the same structure.
- Make it motivating: choose items that children find fun, exciting and visually interesting.
- The bucket and the items are for the lead adult to touch only.
- Use key words such as naming the item, 'open', 'more,' 'again' and 'finished.'

What are we looking for:

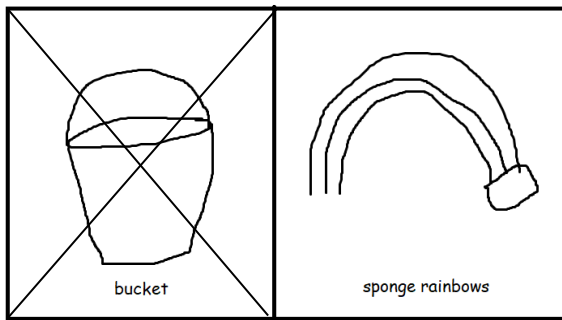
- Anticipation of routines, e.g. when a child sees 'Bucket Time' they show signs of understanding such as moving to their seat independently.
- Attention towards the bucket / activity, such as looking towards the objects, reacting to the exciting items, ENJOYMENT!
- Communication: requesting more or again (verbally or non-verbally), saying the names of items, pointing, sharing reactions with others

Don't:

- Insist children stay seated: some children are 'satellite' learners and will be paying attention from afar.
- Persist with an item if children refuse it or are distressed by it.
- Use items that belong to children or look similar to belongings they play with.



Stage 2: Attention Builders



You can link these activities to topics, themes, storybooks or focus on key vocabulary such as numbers, shapes or colours (or you can just make it FUN!)



Rainbow sponge



Attention Builders are any activity, led by the lead adult, which encourages children to **focus for longer**. They are **exciting** and **visual** and generally **involve several steps**. They include a LOT of **anticipation**. It is great to **repeat these often**.



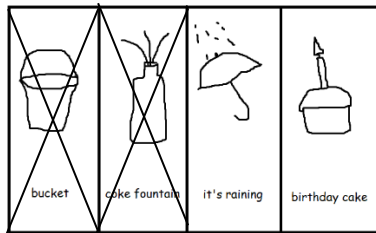
1. Use your whiteboard timetable to say and show what is happening next.
2. The lead adult delivers one attention building activity, in an exciting way, building lots of anticipation with countdowns, pauses, gestures, facial expression and tone of voice and the same use of minimal language focusing on key words.

What are we looking for:

- **Anticipation and curiosity.**
- **Attention towards the activity for longer and towards an activity with a number of steps.**
- **Communication: requesting more or again (verbally or non-verbally), saying key words or phrases, pointing, sharing reactions with others**

This activity is for the lead adult to touch only.

Stage 3: Turn Taking and Shifting Attention



At Stage 3, the lead adult demonstrates a simple activity and then offers one or two children a turn.



If not every child has a turn, this can be really challenging. It can also be challenging waiting for our turn. For some children, you might like to prepare them with a simple visual which says 'You are turn number 3' Or 'Your turn is on Tuesday.'



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1. The lead adult models the activity. Similar to Stage 2, build in lots of anticipation and stick to key words, but make it fun and exciting.
2. Choose 1 – 2 children to have a turn.
3. Make sure the activity is visually exciting for everyone to watch, not just to have a turn at – otherwise children not having a turn may lose interest.

What are we looking for:

- Attention towards the activity for longer and towards an activity with a number of steps.
- Communication: requesting more or again (verbally or non-verbally), saying key words or phrases, pointing, sharing reactions with others.
- Developing the ability to take turns and to wait for a turn.
- Being confident to give it a go.
- Copying an action / series of actions that an adult has modelled and following simple instructions.

You can choose supporting adults to have a turn too, they can model how to join in.

Stage 4: Individual Task

At Stage 4, children begin in the circle and an adult models a simple activity. Then the children complete this activity individually (usually at a table). At the end they return to the circle to share their activity with everyone and have a 'big finish.'

As you can tell, this is a big step and requires lots of skills.

What we are looking for:

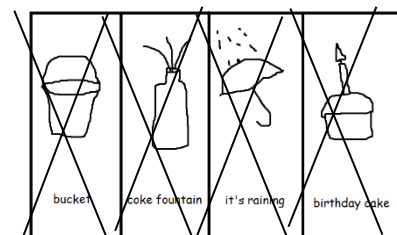
- Shifting attention from a group focus, to an individual task and then back again
- Transitions to different spaces in the room e.g. circle to table and back again
- Maintaining attention for a longer time (especially because Stage 4 comes after three stages!)
- Following instructions
- Persisting or 'keeping going' at an activity

Children may take a while to progress to this stage, and some children in your group may be ready for Stage 4 before others.

Each child should have an individual kit with all the materials that they need – 'takeaway' containers are useful for this.



- ✓ Activities should be **simple to complete** and be **easier than the child's ability**: we are not teaching craft or other skills here, we are aiming to build attention skills.
- ✓ Activities should be **fun and motivating**
- ✓ **Always model the activity first**
- ✓ **Always provide individual 'kits.'**
- ✓ **Don't worry what the end product looks like!**
- ✓ Supporting adults – **enable children to attempt the task independently**



Coming back together:

Once the task is complete, come back together as a group. It is useful to have a 'circle time' song for this. Children can show or give you their completed task, and then end with a big fun finish linked to the activity. Here are some ideas:

- Sing happy birthday and pretend to blow your candles out
- Wave blue fabric like the sea and sing 'row, row, row your boat.'
- Post letters in a pretend letter box
- 'Park' cars in a masking tape / drawn car park
- Sing Zoom Zoom we're going to the moon with a parachute

... and that's it! Bucket Time is 'finished!'