

Attention and Listening - strategies and activities

Many children with communication difficulties need to improve their attention and listening. These skills underpin the development of speech and language.

Strategies:

- Ensure your child is listening before giving them an instruction - Say their **name**, **gain eye contact** with them and prompt them to **look and listen**.
- Introduce 4 key listening rules - **Sitting still, Looking at the person talking, keeping quiet, listening to all the words**.
- Use visuals alongside spoken language, e.g., gestures and photographs etc, to support your child's attention and listening skills.
- Provide your child with regular prompts to listen and attend during structured activities.
- Keep instructions, as short and simple as possible. Say them in the order you want them done and try to avoid before/after. Give them step by step, pausing between each step
- Provide your child with multi-sensory learning experiences, e.g., introduce new topics using objects create a multi-sensory learning experience – so your child can touch, feel, see, smell, taste and hear new vocabulary items.
- Set **time limits** for your child to complete tasks (make these more achievable to start with). Use a timer of some sort to help the children be visually aware of the progress of time e.g. sand timer.

- Try to **alternate between listening / quiet tasks** and more active ones (allow energy release between activities e.g. outdoor activities).
- **Controlled choices** - Give your child controlled choices rather than telling them what to do or asking them to do a specific task, e.g., 'Do you want to tidy the cars or the blocks' 'Do you want to eat your apple or your sandwich first'
- Use **now-next boards (see example below)**: Print out pictures of activities your child likes and activities you want them to do. Put a picture of the thing you want your child to do now on 'now' and the thing they want to do on 'next', for example 'brush teeth **now**' 'TV **next**'. This can be useful if your child is reluctant to do something you want them to do and gives them a clear and immediate reward. You can stick the board on the wall and put the pictures on with Blu Tac.
- **Reward charts (see example below)**: This is similar to the now-next board, but you can increase the number of 'jobs' your child needs to do before they get their reward.
 - Tell your child that in order to get their 'reward' they have to get a certain number of stickers. The stickers represent the 'jobs' you want your child to do, e.g., reading, phonics, brush teeth etc.
 - You can put a picture of the 'reward' on the table in front of your child, so they have a visual reminder of what they are working for.
 - When your child completes the job you can give them a sticker. You can make this visual for them by drawing circles on a piece of paper that correspond to the 'jobs'. Once they complete a job you can place a sticker in the circle.
 - When your child has got all of the stickers they can have their reward, e.g., play a game, go outside.
 - You can start with 1 or 2 stickers and gradually increase this number of stickers they need to get

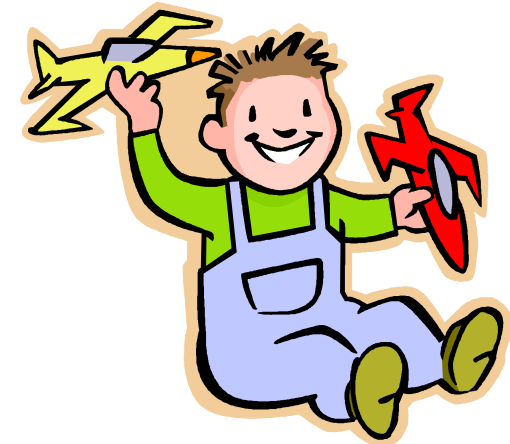
Activities:

Setting up the activities

- ◆ Reduce other background noise. Turn off the T.V.
- ◆ Decide how best to seat your child so they can also see your face
- ◆ Choose activities that are motivating for your child. Some you may try may be more motivating than others
- ◆ Be clear about your aims – focus on one activity, when this is finished, clear it away
- ◆ Be clear about your child's response – pointing to a picture, waiting for 'go'
- ◆ Be clear about how you will prompt your child if she/he needs help

Will you

- Repeat the instruction or sound
- Demonstrate the task yourself
- Point or gesture
- Remove choices so the child has only one item to choose
- Activities are recommended to be carried out for about 20 minutes at least three times a week



Attention and Listening Activities



☺ Hunt the animal

- Place pictures/miniature toys of common animals on the table in front of your child, e.g. cat, sheep, pig, lion.
- Make the noise of one of the animals, e.g. 'meow', 'moo', and see if they can point to the right picture.
- Let your child post the picture, or put it back in the basket, when they have found the correct animal.
- Repeat this until all of the pictures/toys are back in the basket.

☺ Matching Sounds

- You will need a range of shakers/noise makers for this game, e.g. musical instruments, or bottles filled with different objects (rice, buttons, pasta, etc.).
- Ask your child to close his eyes or turn around while you shake one of them.
- When you have made the sound, ask your child to open their eyes and find the shaker you used. They can then place that instrument back in the basket.
- You can also play this game by taking turns to make/identify the sound, so that your child can take a turn at being the leader.
- You can increase the level of difficulty of this task by asking your child to wait while you play two instruments in sequence and seeing if they can copy you.



Blowing Bubbles

- Make sure that you have your child's eye contact before blowing bubbles for them. Do not immediately blow the bubbles again, but wait to see if your child will 'request' more – this might be through a word or a gesture

☺ Waiting for 'go'

- This can be carried out using a range of activities, e.g. knocking down a tower, rolling cars down a ramp, rolling a ball, etc.
- Your child must wait until you say 'go' before carrying out the activity.
- Gradually increase the amount of time the child has to wait until you say 'go', or add extra words, e.g. "Ready, Steady, Bananas, Go", etc.

☺Kim's Game

- Put 4-6 objects on a tray and ask your child to look at them carefully.
- Next, ask them to turn around/cover their eyes while you take one object away. Can they remember which one has gone?

☺Hidden Towers

- Place a number of coloured bricks (two of each colour) and a kitchen/toilet roll tube upright on the table in front of your child.
- Tell them to watch carefully as you put 3 bricks in a pattern of different colours into the tube to build a tower.
- Ask your child to build the same tower with their blocks.
- Remove the tube and see if your towers match.

☺Feelie-Box/bag

- Cut a hole in a cardboard box, big enough so that your child's hand will fit in and so that objects can be removed or use an old pillowcase.
- Place a number of familiar objects in the box/bag.
- Show the child another object, and then place it in the box/bag with the others. Ask your child to find it by touch only by putting their hand in the box/bag.
- Alternatively, you can play this game by describing one of the objects in the box/bag for your child to find by touch.

☺Washing Line Game

- Draw or cut out pictures of a range of clothes.
- Next, draw a washing line on a large piece of paper.
- Ask your child to "hang up" different clothes.
- To make this more difficult, make the instructions more specific, e.g. "hang up the hat and a sock", "put the skirt next to the jumper", etc.

☺Use sound lottos, (e.g. human sounds, transport sounds, etc.) to encourage your child to listen for different sounds.

☺Shopping Game

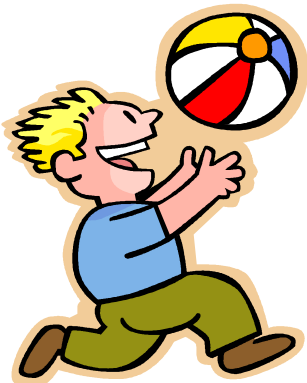
- Put 12 play food items and a 'shopping bag' on the table.
- Name 2 items for your child to put in the bag.
- When he is successful with 2 items, increase the number of items to 3, 4, etc.

☺Picture Lotto:

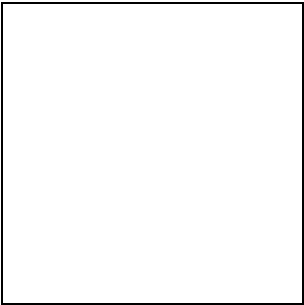
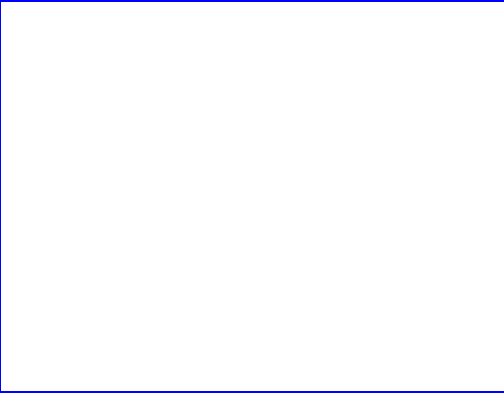
- Using a small picture lotto game give your child a board and place one in front of you.
- Mix up the matching pictures and place them in a pile on the table.
- Select a picture and name it without letting your child see it. He must find the picture on one of the boards.
- When you have done this a number of times, allow the child to take a turn at choosing a picture and naming it without you seeing it.

☺Complete a simple form board/jigsaw – put the pieces in a feely bag, so that your child takes one piece out at a time.

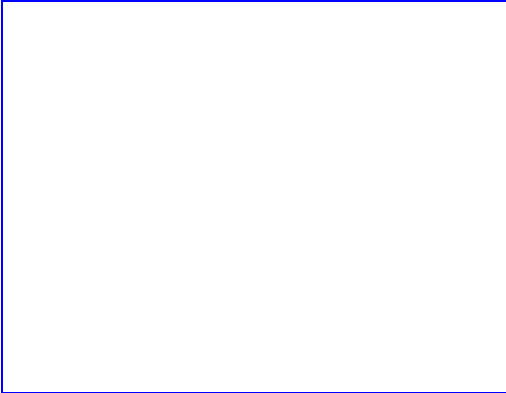
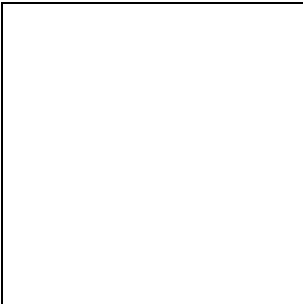
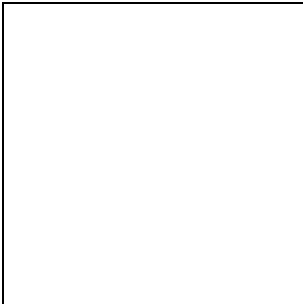
Focus on one activity each day for as long as your child will listen and attend. When they have moved onto something else, put the activity away. Aim to complete about three activities in each session. Keep the area in which you are playing uncluttered.




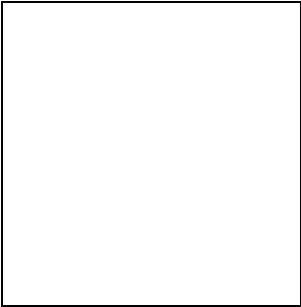
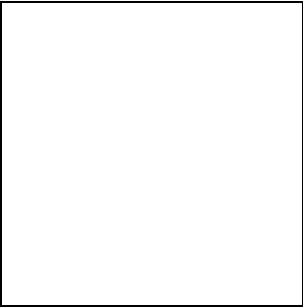
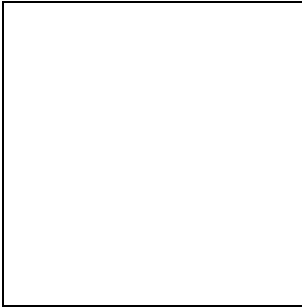
I am working for:



I am working for:

A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for a person to write their name or organization.A smaller, empty rectangular box with a black border, likely for a specific role or department.A smaller, empty rectangular box with a black border, likely for a specific role or department.

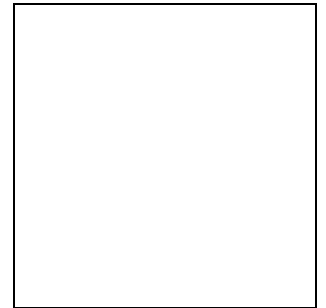
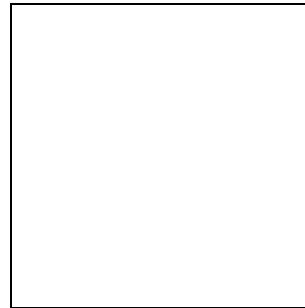
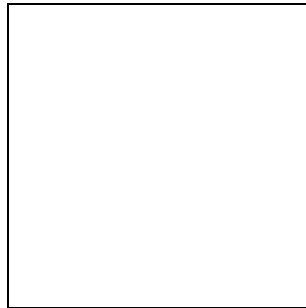
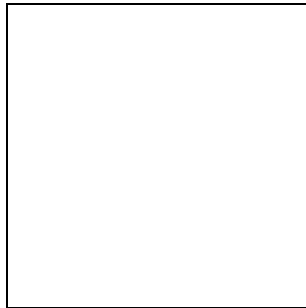
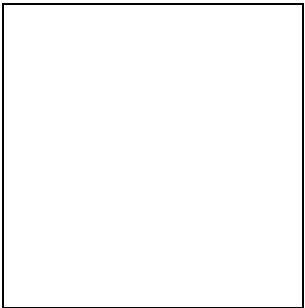
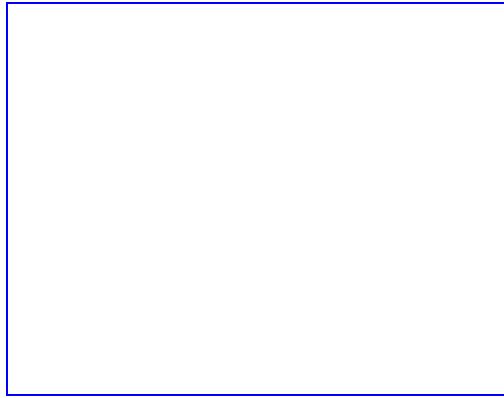
I am working for:

A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, positioned centrally below the text "I am working for:". It is intended for a user to write their name or organization.A small, empty square box with a black border, positioned to the left of the other two boxes. It is intended for a user to write a number or short identifier.A small, empty square box with a black border, positioned in the middle of the three boxes. It is intended for a user to write a number or short identifier.A small, empty square box with a black border, positioned to the right of the other two boxes. It is intended for a user to write a number or short identifier.

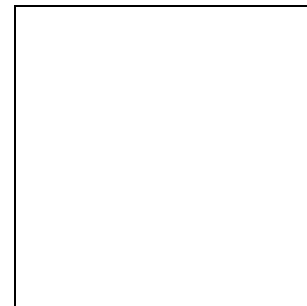
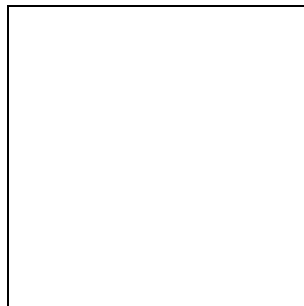
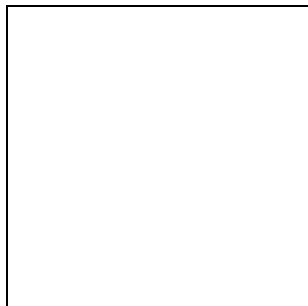
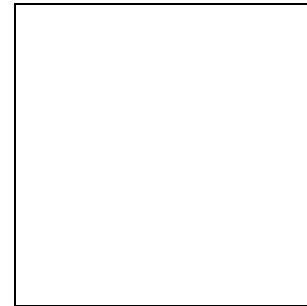
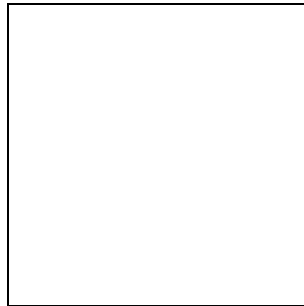
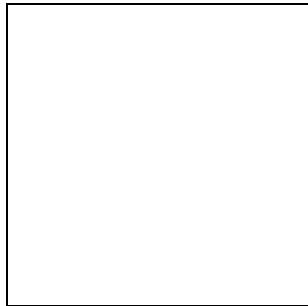
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A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, positioned centrally below the text "I am working for:". It is intended for the user to write the name of the organization they work for.A square, empty box with a black border, located on the far left of the bottom row. It is intended for the user to write their first name.A square, empty box with a black border, located in the second position from the left of the bottom row. It is intended for the user to write their last name.A square, empty box with a black border, located in the third position from the left of the bottom row. It is intended for the user to write their phone number.A square, empty box with a black border, located on the far right of the bottom row. It is intended for the user to write their email address.

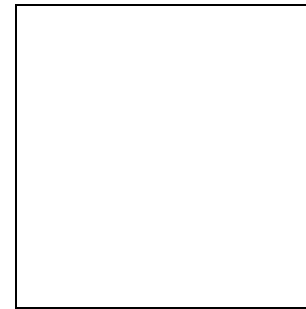
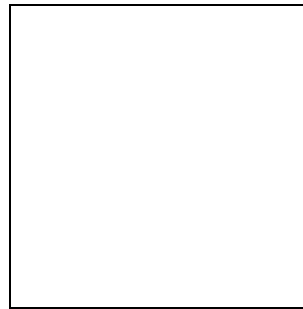
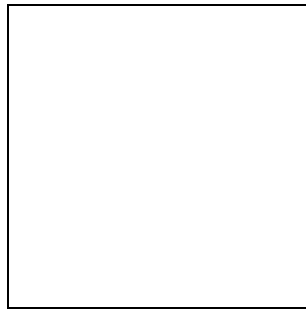
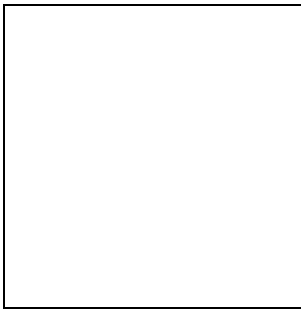
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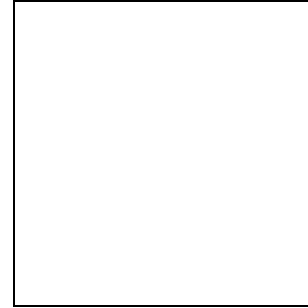
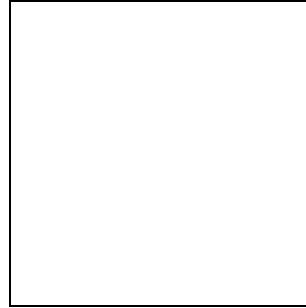
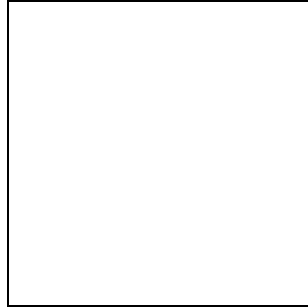
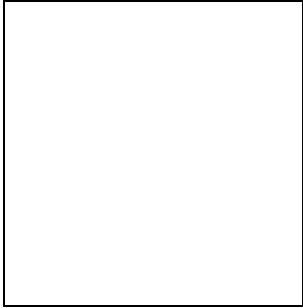


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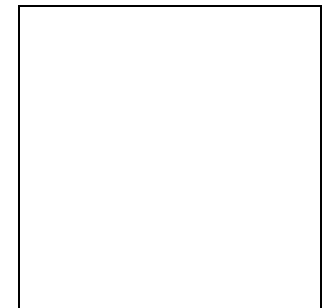
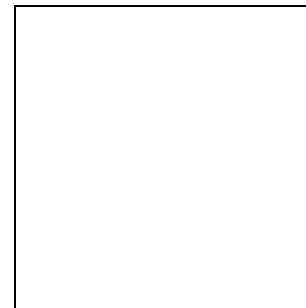
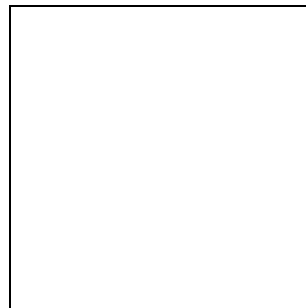
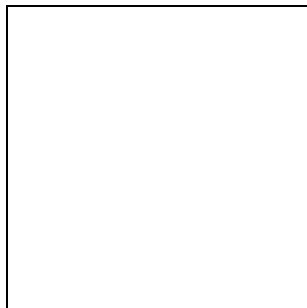
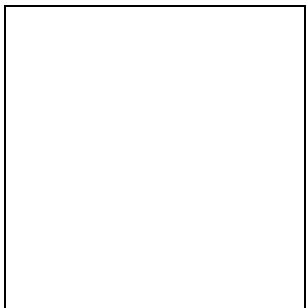


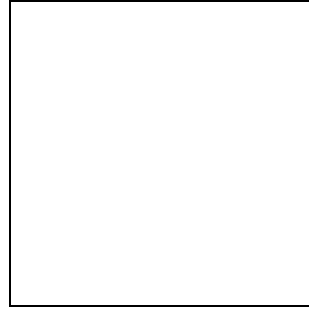
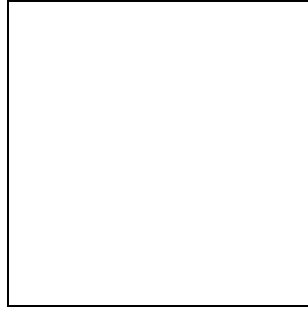
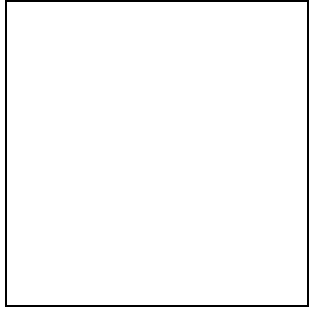
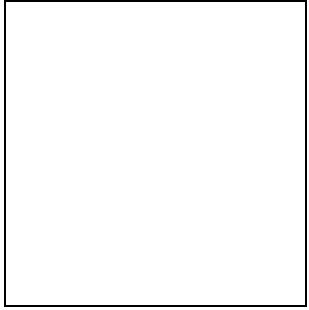
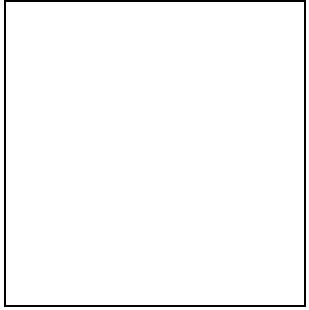
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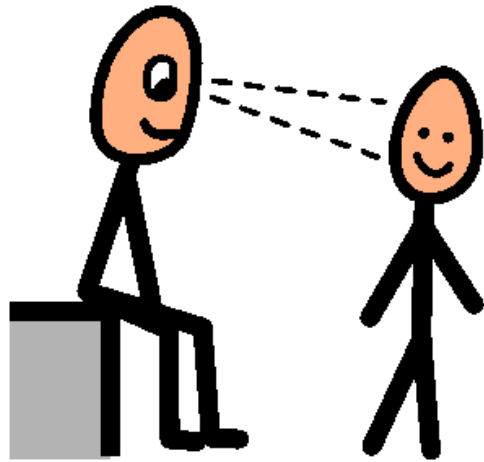


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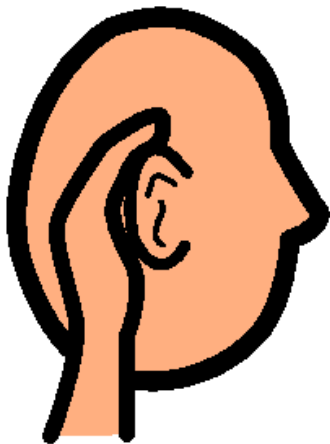
look at me



sit on floor



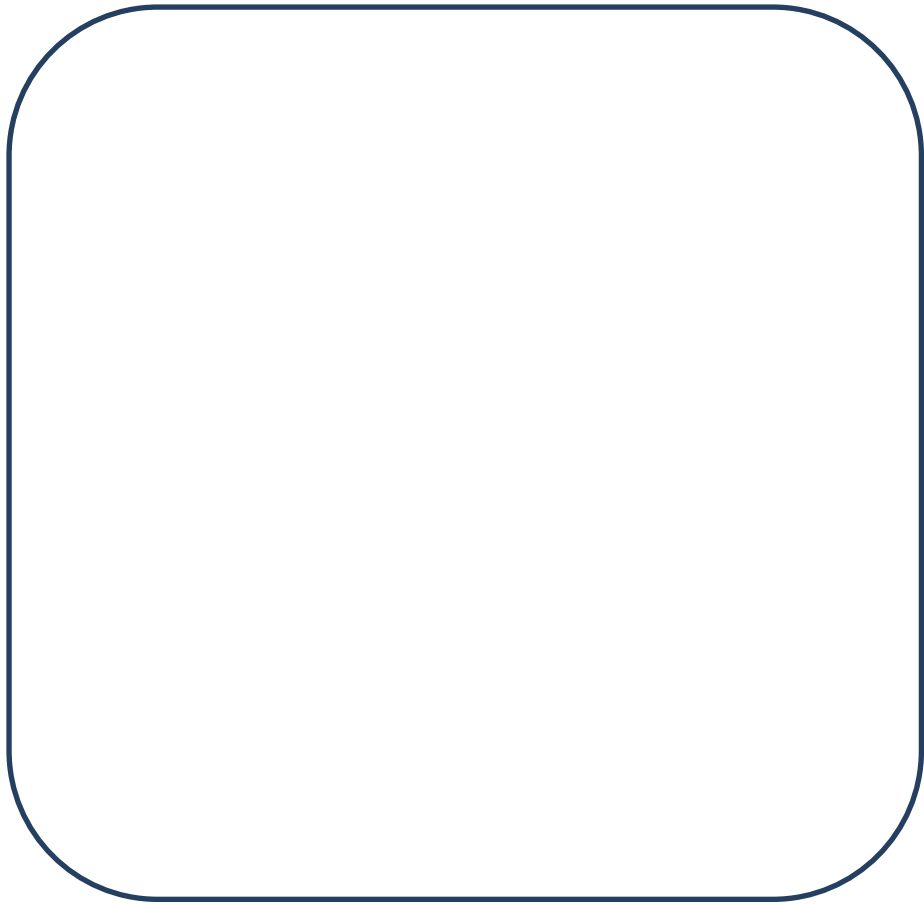
listen to me



hands in lap



Now



Next

