



Parent Tip Sheet

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to how children think, explore and figure things out. There are a handful of areas where deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) kids seem to be at greater risk for difficulty or delay. However, there are many ways in which cognitive development in D/HH children is just like that in hearing children.

Before they're able to explore the world with their bodies, children are already exploring the world with their mind and their senses. Psychologists used to believe that the mind developed pretty much the same way regardless of a child's experiences, but we've since come to understand that both the child's environment and their own actions & experiences can contribute to fostering healthy cognitive development.

Researchers are actively trying to understand why these areas of development seem to be at risk in deaf or hard of hearing children. Two main explanations have been proposed. According to one view, development depends on experience with sound. According to another view, healthy cognitive development depends on successful acquisition of language, whether signed or spoken. Fortunately, both views agree that providing access to sound and access to language (whether signed or spoken) promotes cognitive development.



- ✓ Notice what captures your child's attention and attend to that, as well.
- ✓ Establish eye contact.
- ✓ Play hiding games like peek-a-boo.
- ✓ Watch how your child plays with objects to better understand how the child is understanding the world.
- ✓ Communicate about your child's play by offering words to describe what the child is doing and how items are categorized (e.g., "you are taking care of your stuffed animals- just like a vet!" Or "those are vehicles").
- ✓ Before your child can use words, use gestures that communicate, such as waving bye-bye, show me, give me, pointing.
- ✓ Play games that encourage your child to imitate what you are doing, such as building or feeding.
- ✓ Do things that are unexpected and surprising with your child.
- ✓ Ask your child about feelings and thoughts of other people, animals, or toys.
- ✓ Use mental-state language, e.g., "Then what happened?"



*Share these with your Early Intervention providers/parent to parent support providers who have experience with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and discuss ideas on how to implement these tips with your child. <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/tipsheets.html>

"This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number UJ1MC30748-01-00 for Family Leadership In Language And Learning for \$1,500,00.00 This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government."