



Outcomes Project Update

June 2007

Issue 2

This is the second newsletter from the Outcomes team at the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL). Hello to all our new participants and those who have been involved for longer. The project is progressing well. We have now recruited 350 participants - approaching our target of 400. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to recruit more children and to assess the children who are enrolled on the study. We will be doing 380 or more assessments - that will keep us really busy!

We are very excited to introduce our mascot 'Lochi the Lion' to you. Lochi stands for 'Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment'. The study also has its very own website which will be ready for browsing in mid July 2007. Below is a snapshot of our homepage. Look for us at www.outcomes.nal.gov.au.

Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment

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Hi, I'm LOCHI the lion from the Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment study.

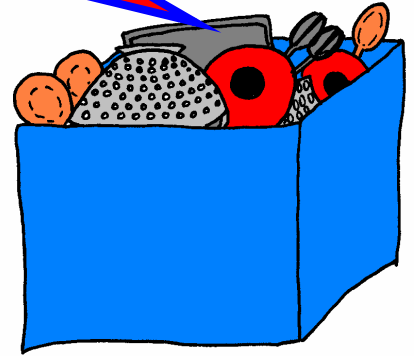
This study is conducted by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) to examine the long-term speech, language, psychosocial and educational outcomes of children with hearing impairment.

Children who wear hearing aids and/or cochlear implants are included.

Making Noise

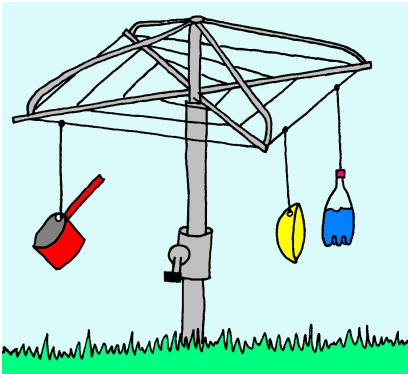
Sound Box

Collect a range of implements from around the house that can make noises. For example from the kitchen you might include saucepan lids, baking trays, egg beaters, plastic bowls, wooden spoons, cutlery, graters and saucepans. Keep them together for noisy play time.



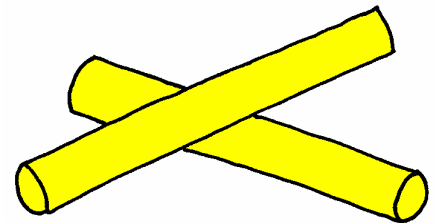
Musical Tree

Tie different noisemakers that can be hit with a wooden spoon to a clothes line or low hanging (but sturdy) branch. For example saucepans, plastic drink bottles and foil pie dishes. Visit your local charity shop for cheap kitchen wear that can be left outside. Heavier metal objects (such as those made from iron) make a lower, louder sound than metal objects made from lighter materials (such as aluminium).



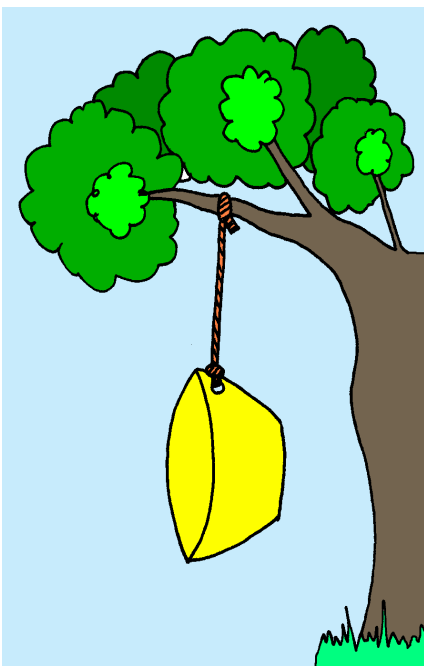
Tapping Sticks

Collect wooden rods in different lengths and thickness. These can be hit together. You can also use sticks from trees but make sure these are sanded to avoid splinters.



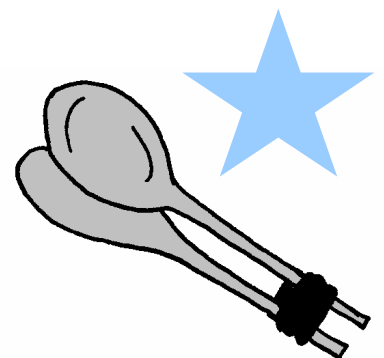
Gong

Suspend a large metal mixing bowl or enamel basin from a strong tree branch. Drill a hole through it to tie it securely. Choose heavier metal products for a better sound. This can be struck with a metal or wooden spoon or large stick and is great for listening games.



Spoons

Hold two spoons with their backs touching and a juice bottle lid between the handles. Bind tightly with tape so the bowls of the spoons are slightly apart they can then be hit on objects to make a sound.



Feedback on Feedback

“Why do my child’s hearing aids whistle?” and “How do I stop it?”
NAL Audiologist Emma Van Wanrooy reveals all.

‘Feedback’ is the technical name for the whistling sound made by hearing aids. It’s caused by the sound produced by a hearing aid travelling back into the microphone of the hearing aid. This happens when you switch on a hearing aid that is not in the ear. The feedback sounds like the ear-piercing noise you get when you hold a microphone too close to a loudspeaker.



When your child is wearing a hearing aid, feedback may occur because:

- **Objects are close to the hearing aid** - When something is close to the hearing aid, sound bounces off that object and travels back into the hearing aid, causing feedback. This is common for babies wearing hearing aids as their heads are often leaning against bedding or against you. This may also occur if your child is wearing a hat and it touches the hearing aid.
- **The earmould fitting** - A well fitted earmould seals the ear better, decreasing the chances of sound escaping and causing feedback. As babies grow out of their earmoulds quite quickly, feedback is quite common at a young age. As children get older and their ears grow more slowly, problems with feedback should diminish.
- **The hearing aid settings** - Hearing aids that are set very loudly are more likely to feedback, as loud sounds are more likely to be captured by the hearing aid's microphone. Audiologists determine the loudness of amplified sounds for individual children according to his/her needs so that he/she gets the most benefits from wearing hearing aids.

If feedback from your child's hearing aids is an ongoing issue for your family please speak to one of our Research Audiologists. We'll work with you and your Australian Hearing Audiologist to help minimise this.

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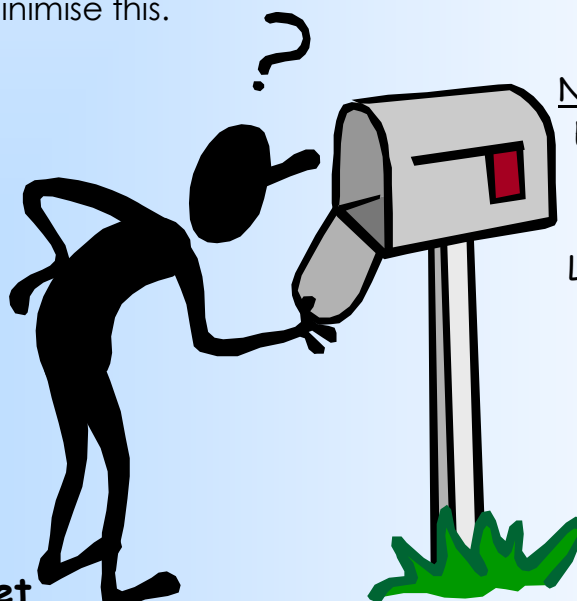
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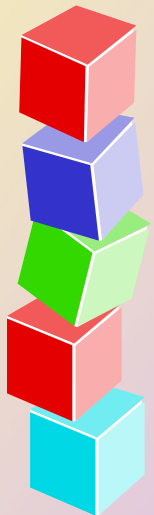
Preschool Language Scale

We use the Preschool Language Scale (PLS) to assess children's understanding and use of English. The test is administered to monitor the development of 'auditory comprehension' and 'expressive communication' from birth through 6 years 11 months of age.

The PLS is a standardised test. This means that when it was developed, many children (1564 children in fact) were tested to work out specific information about language development of children at different ages in the general population. In the Outcomes study, we relate the score of each child to the normative population to generate a "standard score". Therefore, the test has to be administered in the "standard" way. This means, for example, using the phrasing specified in the test for eliciting responses, allowing only two repetitions of an item and requiring children to make seven consecutive errors before the test can be stopped. It also means that the PLS can only be administered by a speech pathologist or a person with specialised experience and training in assessing children's language.



Milena Skinner holds the PLS-4 teddy after her 12 month assessment



We realise that some children do not perform their best when doing standardised assessments such as the PLS. Sometimes it might be frustrating to watch your child being tested because you know that they can do the task - but they just won't do it on the day or the way the examiner is asking them to. This is partly because completing the assessment is a strange situation for most children. Don't worry - all children are being assessed in the same "standard" way and the statistics of the test have accounted for this. The PLS scores give teachers information about your child's language development that is useful for planning the program for your child.