

You Can... Use signs and symbols to save airspace

If we want children to listen to us, we have to be careful how we use our voices – putting some information into the visual field frees up the airspace for more important information.

Thinking points

- While repetition is essential for children's learning, it is *their* repetition that counts, not yours. If you repeatedly explain aspects of class organisation or nag children about behaviour, they will switch off because this is not the sort of thing that motivates them. You want them to associate your voice with interesting, relevant listening experiences, not miserable ones.
- Holding up a picture or symbol to show the behaviour you require (like those on photocopiable page 61) can be more effective than a verbal instruction. Visual directions, such as street signs, often elicit a more immediate, automatic response, and can be less wounding to children's self-esteem.
- Contemporary children – brought up in a multimedia society – also tend to find visual cues easy to remember, so they are a helpful aid to classroom management.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Keep your voice for the listening activities that matter. Use visual alternatives to cover more workaday aspects of classroom life, such as organisation and behaviour management. For example:
 - use actions like holding up your hand to tell children silence is required – as they see you, they mimic your movements and fall silent
 - hold up or point to pictures, signs and symbols (see photocopiable page 61) to remind children of behavioural rules, rather than repeatedly explaining or nagging (for example, the listening rules).
- Make a visual timetable like the one shown in the illustration to show the events of the school day. Each day, attach cards with pictures/symbols (see examples on photocopiable page 61) in L>R sequence to indicate the events that children can expect during that section of the day. Encourage the children to keep an eye on the timetable so they are mentally prepared for each event. Boys particularly find it reassuring to know what is coming next.
- Display clear, highly visual posters for key instructions, such as 'Have a go at spelling' and 'How to find a spelling word' (see photocopiable page 60). Rather than constantly repeating these instructions (which eventually just sounds like nagging), just point to the poster and say: *And don't forget...*
- Use symbols for behaviour management – pictures or coloured cards that you and any other adults in the classroom can carry with you. Like a football referee, you and any other adults in the classroom can show these to rule-breakers rather than speaking (when someone is not attending, catch his eye by waving the 'Look at the teacher' card).

TIMETABLE					
□	□	□	□	□	□
BREAK					
□	□	□			
LUNCH					
BREAK					