Play Audiometry

Ages
Children who are difficult to screen due to age or developmental level

Purpose
To obtain valid results with very young children (ages three to four years) or those children who have difficulty with standard pure tone audiometric methods

Description
Is a modification of standard pure tone screening; play audiometry conditions the child to respond to the sound by placing a toy in a container, rather than raising their hand

Equipment
Pure tone audiometer, stickers, and small child-safe toys such as animals, airplanes, cars, clothes pins, nested boxes, or pegs and pegboard

Facilities
Appropriate size table and chairs in a quiet, comfortable setting with limited distractions

Procedure
1. First, practice without the headphones on.
2. Lay headphones on the table, facing the child, with audiometer set at 2000 Hz and maximum dB level to ensure tone is audible.
3. Hold the toy near your ear; assume a “listening” attitude and present tone.
4. Indicate through facial expression the sound was heard and then drop the toy in a container, such as a pail; repeat as often as necessary until the child shows interest.
5. Offer the toy to the child and place your hand on theirs to guide the first responses; encourage the child to wait until they hear the sound.
6. When the child appears ready, present the sound and guide the child’s hand to put the toy in the container.
7. The child may give consistent responses after only one demonstration or may need several demonstrations to respond on their own.
8. Once the child understands the play audiometry technique use the audiometric procedure as described in the pure tone audiometry screening procedure.
9. Reward the child with praise after initial responses. If this is not effective, a tangible reward like a sticker may be given.
10. If the child still is unable to do the screening after re-instruction, stop and document “unable to screen.”
Considerations

- The tone to response time varies between children; some children will drop the toy as soon as they hear the tone; others will wait until the sound goes off before dropping the toy.
- If the child does not accept the headphones, the screener should try putting them on for only one or two seconds, removing and rewarding the child. Slowly increase the time with the headphones on.
- A timid child will often benefit from watching other children successfully complete the screening.
  - If the child is unable to screen, refer to Rescreen and REFER criteria

PASS

Same recommendations as pure tone audiometry screening: a child who responds to all four tones in each ear (25dB at 500 Hz; 20dB at 1000, 2000, and 4000 Hz) does not require rescreening or referral.

Rescreen

Same recommendations as pure tone audiometry screening: if the child does not respond to one or more tones after immediate rescreen, schedule the child for pure tone audiometry rescreening in 14 to 21 days; refer to Rescreen and REFER criteria for further information.