



The Learning Staircase Auditory Discrimination Test

(Lugg 2010)

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What is auditory discrimination?

Auditory discrimination is the ability to distinguish between similar sounds. Weaknesses in auditory discrimination may be caused by physical hearing difficulties such as glue ear, by weaknesses in auditory perception or by a combination of factors. Auditory discrimination difficulties are likely to affect the development of phonological awareness and may also affect auditory processing of verbal information such as instructions.

Test Guidelines

Do this test if the child has phonological difficulties and/or you suspect for some other reason that the child is not able to tell the difference between sounds. You may notice any or all of the following:

- Poor listening skills generally
- Mis-hearing words in isolation or in context
- Particular difficulty with verbal instructions
- Poor articulation of speech sounds and words
- Difficulty developing phonological awareness
- Poor score on Wock (CoPs – Lucid assessment software)

Instructions for administration

Note: You will need a photocopied recording sheet for each child.

Seat the child comfortably in a quiet room with no background noise or other distractions. Explain that you are going to tell the child two words together and the child needs to tell you if the words are the same or different. Give examples as follows:

“I’m going to say two words. I want you to tell me if they are the same or different. Listen to these words”

Then say the words: **“table – table”** Make sure you say them slowly and clearly.

“Were those words the same or different?” Hopefully the child will say “same”.

*“That’s right. Now listen to these words: **table – cable.** Are they the same or different?”*

If the child has mis-understood the instructions, explain them in more detail and talk through the differences between the words if necessary. Then say:

“Now I’m going to say some more word pairs. I just want you to say ‘same’ or ‘different’. But if you can see my mouth move, it’s too easy. So I’m going to get you to turn around so you can’t see me.”

Ensure that the child is facing the other way completely, i.e. not sideways on. Then start the test. Say each pair of words slowly and clearly. Mark the child's response on the recording sheet. It's fine to repeat the pair if necessary, but mark the form by ticking the 'R' column. Numerous repetitions may indicate auditory processing or attentional difficulty.

When you say the words, say them clearly with a neutral intonation. Make sure that your voice does not inadvertently change when you say the matching pairs. Do not give detailed feedback to the child while doing the test. If you need to give encouragement, keep it non-committal. "Great work – well done!"

Evaluating results

When the test is completed, count up the errors. Use the table below to determine appropriate action (see note below). If there are numerous errors, the child may need to be referred to an audiologist. If there are only a few errors, ensure that this aspect is included in the child's tuition and re-test after one term. If no progress (or very limited progress) is apparent despite remediation, consider referring the child to an audiologist.

Note: Bear in mind that the following table is only a guideline. Use your professional judgement and knowledge of the child to decide on appropriate action. In the case of a younger child (below 8 yrs), glue ear is a strong possibility. This needs to be diagnosed as soon as possible if the child's phonological and other auditory processing skills are not to be affected.

Age	Extra Tuition and monitor	Refer to Audiologist
4-5	4 – 7 errors	8+ errors
6-7	3 – 6 errors	7+ errors
8-10	2 – 5 errors	6+ errors
10+	2-4 errors	5+ errors

Use the table at the bottom of the form to analyse specific difficulties. Count the number of errors in each category. This will identify if there are particular difficulties with initial, end or medial sounds, or with blends.

General note

Not all sound combinations are included – this would take far too long. The samples provided will give a good indication of auditory discrimination problems. The teacher can add in further combinations if required.



The Learning Staircase Auditory Discrimination Test

Name: _____

Age: _____

Reason for test: _____

Tester: _____

Date: _____

I = initial sounds, F – final sounds, M – medial vowel sounds, B - Blends

			√/X	R				√/X	R	
1	car	tar	I			21	card	cart	F	
2	pin	pin				22	sit	set	M	
3	sell	shell	I			23	back	bat	F	
4	bug	bud	F			24	rich	rich		
5	badge	badge				25	sack	smack	Bl	
6	whistle	thistle	I			26	thin	thing	F	
7	win	wind	F			27	cot	cut	M	
8	king	king				28	pill	pill		
9	lathe	laid	F			29	dale	gale	I	
10	bag	bug	M			30	thread	shred	Bl	
11	vine	fine	I			31	scar	star	Bl	
12	sleep	sleek	F			32	ship	chip	I	
13	go	grow	Bl			33	din	bin	I	
14	stain	stain				34	bell	ball	M	
15	dig	dug	M			35	leg	leg		
16	scream	stream	Bl			36	bet	but	M	
17	grow	glow	Bl			37	fat	flat	Bl	
18	shoot	shot	M			38	lack	lake	M	
19	sick	thick	I			39	stick	stick		
20	pray	play	Bl			40	back	bag	F	

	Items (<i>cross through incorrect ones</i>)								Errors
Initial Sounds	c/t	s/sh	wh/th	v/f	s/th	g/d	d/b	sh/ch	/8
Final Sounds	g/d	n/d	th/d	p/k	t/d	k/t	n/ng	k/g	/8
Medial Sounds	a/u	i/u	oo/o	i/e	o/u	e/a(II)	e/u	a/a-e	/8
Blends	g/gr	scr/str	gr/gl	pr/pl	s/sm	thr/shr	sc/st	f/fl	/8