

pediatric pointers



Quit worrying about who's watching and have some fun.

3. Get some new toys. Donate those blocks you've had for the past 10 years to charity. Spend a little time at the toy store looking for unique, fun and easy-to-clean toys. Try a few wind-up toys or squishy balls. No one wants to play with old, dated-looking toys.

4. Make testing fun. Most universities teach you to never give the patient-response button to a child. This bit of information took years away from my ability to get good test results. Giving a small boy the power of the button might seem unconventional at first, but boys respect buttons. Allow them to "zap" space pirates when they hear them. Even though they never actually see a space pirate, they are quite content to give them a "zap" upon hearing them. You will amaze even yourself at how long you can keep them in the booth using this technique. Zappy-happy boys only need to be reminded once the button will disappear if they misuse it. They do not want it taken away and will usually play appropriately. If they don't, take the button away and have them clap their hands to squash the space pirates.

Girls require a different strategy. They are not as eager to push a button and "zap" pirates and certainly don't like to squish them. However, a pretty fairy wand works equally as well. The wand has magic which alerts the fairies that Tinkerbell is near. Everytime they hear Tinkerbell, they wave the magic wand to tell the other fairies. I've gone through a few wands from over-zealous wand wavers, but overall, this technique works well for girls.

5. Speak eye-to-eye. If you want to see the world from a child's perspective, you'll need to get on your knees. Talking to a child requires seeing eye-to-eye with them. Talking at one doesn't take much effort and will provide you with about the same amount of cooperation as the effort you put into it. Never underestimate a toddler's perspective of a situation. Get down to their level, look them straight in the eye and tell them what you're going to do. They have more control over the situation than we'd like to admit.

6. Prepare for round 2. Working with children requires patience and practice. Even the most skilled pediatric audiologist may not be able to get good test results the first time, but they will certainly make note of important information for the next visit. Many children with sensory issues do better with VRA first. Learn what you did wrong the first time and adjust for the next visit.

Each child is unique in what motivates them. The above ideas have worked well in my clinic, but keep your imagination open. In addition to finding your own strategies for success, you might be surprised at how much fun you can have, too. 💰

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Happy Ideas for The Pint-Sized Set

Doctor visits and pain are an association children make from a very early age. Even "well-child" visits conclude with vaccinations and tears. So, from a little person's perspective, the audiologist is no different and just as scary. Additionally, an audiologist's intimidating equipment and a room that feels and sounds funny can compound an already-fearful situation.

When dealing with children, you must be quick and clever if you want to glean information. As a pediatric audiologist and mother of a doctor-phobic child, let me share some pointers.

1. Shed the coat. White coats terrorize kids. If you are attached to the significance and prestige it carries, then you should probably work with adults. Kids don't care and associate it with pain. This rule is simple: White coats can't be trusted.

2. Get over yourself. Kids know when you fake having fun—for that matter, so do adults. Try letting go by having fun balancing blocks on your forehead. You don't have to be a member of the circus to juggle and will get more laughs if you mess up. Kids like the unexpected and will wait just long enough for you to get that OAE to see if you can actually balance three blocks at once.

