

# VI Times

Volume 4, Issue 1

MN Regions 5 & 7 Vision - O&M Staff  
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## Vision-O&M Staff

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to parents and teachers of students with vision impairments. We hope to send regular newsletters that will cover topics of interest that are informative and create a base of knowledge that will assist our students with their on-going success!

## Sensory Skills

In general conversations, we often hear the people around us say that children with vision impairments have stronger other senses because they have lost vision. The reality is that the senses aren't stronger because one is diminished, they become more acute with training and experience.

It is important to help your child become more aware of the sensory around him/her. The five senses: low vision when possible, hearing, taste, smell, and touch are essential in becoming comfortable with the world.

Maximizing any visual input by learning to interpret shapes, colors, blurs, and blobs is always valuable. The senses of taste and smell are helpful in determining the safety or the enjoyment of the objects/items in the environment. The ability to smell dangerous odors (gas, ammonia, etc.) can be lifesaving. The greatest of all the sensory skills will become hearing.

Listening skills do not replace vision and are not automatically learned and must be learned just as learning to read or do math.



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**Contact your Teacher for the Blind / Visually Impaired or Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist if:**

- You have further questions on the newsletter topic
- Would prefer the newsletter in electronic format by email or in print.

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## Learning to Listen

Learning to listen involves more than hearing sound. The chart below shows the complex process of listening for meaning and understanding.



Hearing occurs when raw sound enters the ear and goes to the brain for interpretation.

At any age, the child must first be able to isolate or locate the sound heard. Recognition of the sound will come with experience. S/he must then be able to focus attention on the sound and determine the direction and the source. Attention to the sound is a specific skill to learn because distracting or interrupting sounds will cause the

listening focus to be changed until the child can control their focus.

Understanding what makes the sound and what the sound means is essential for your child to learn about safety, fun, and every day information. Knowing that the front door closing means someone is coming home is a great way to teach social skills.

The next step is to evaluate or judge what the sound is telling you. Drawing on memory for past experience will tell your child if what type of response should be made in response to the sound.

With that decision, your child responds to the sound.

All of this happens within seconds. As your child gets older, sound and listening will become more and more important in the classroom, home, and community. Listening is used in interactions, travel, learning, living, and playing.

### Sounds to Know At Home

Running water

Telephone

Doorbell

Alarm clock

Vacuum cleaner

Flushing toilet

Opening/closing closet doors or drawers

Kitchen sounds

- Refrigerator
- Dishwasher
- Blender
- Toaster pop-up
- Stirring
- Oven racks

Hairdryer

Furnace

Air conditioner

Washing Machine

Dryer

Garage door opening/closing

Dog barking

Swingset sounds

## Listening is Also Nonverbal

Children with vision learn early in their lives to observe the actions and expressions of speakers and playmates to determine the meaning of the words and sounds they hear. Without the visual input, the child is not able to perceive or interpret the nonverbal part of the communication. The meaning that is part of the whole (action, words, background involvement) may be lost.

As we teach the child who is visually impaired to listen, we must also teach them about the typically visual things that occur with sound:

- Movement or action
- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- Pace
- Pauses

Children with impaired vision often will become more quiet when sound or voices are heard. They may wait longer to respond, simply because they want to try to interpret what is happening. If they talk, they lose the connection with the sound and may not get it back. Sound is so fleeting, not stable like seeing an object. Sound is also fast moving and doesn't always have clear direction. It is possible for the child to think the person talking is behind him/her when it is actually an electronic speaker or sound booster and the real person is in a different position.

Knowing the cues for judging what the nonverbal are that go with what is heard is a sophisticated skill!

# Listening Devices & What They Look Like

In school, students with vision impairments often use digital textbooks along with braille and/or enlarged print. The tools range from portable digital devices to tablets and computers. Here are a few of the ones that are commonly used:

**Book Port Plus:** from the American Printing House for the Blind. Plays Audible.com books, Bookshare, Learning Ally, National Library Service, MP3 files, music, and text files. Personal recorder capability with built in speaker and microphone.



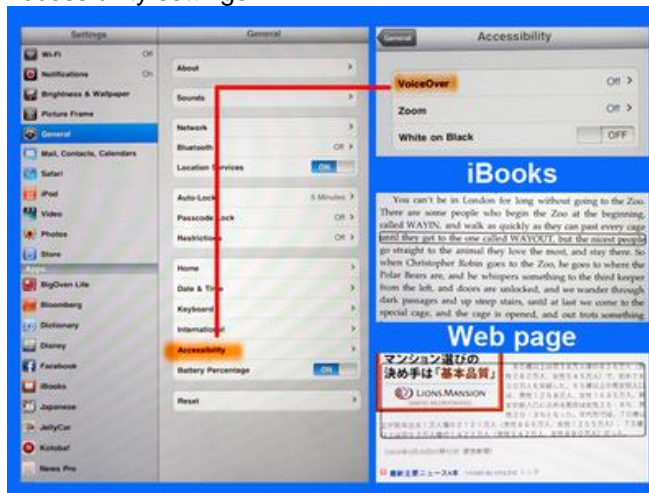
**Book Sense:** from GW Micro. Plays Audible.com books, Bookshare, Learning Ally books, music, National Library Service, podcasts, and Word files.



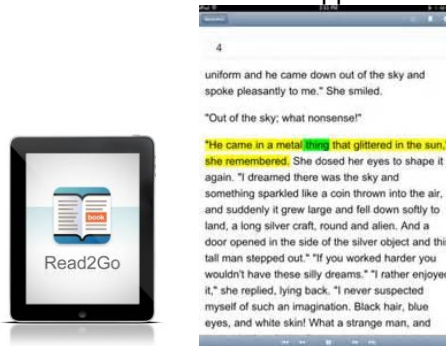
**Victor Reader Stream:** from Humanware. Plays Audible.com books, Bookshare, Learning Ally books, mp3 files, music, National Library Service, podcasts, and text files. Personal recorder capability with built in speaker and microphone.



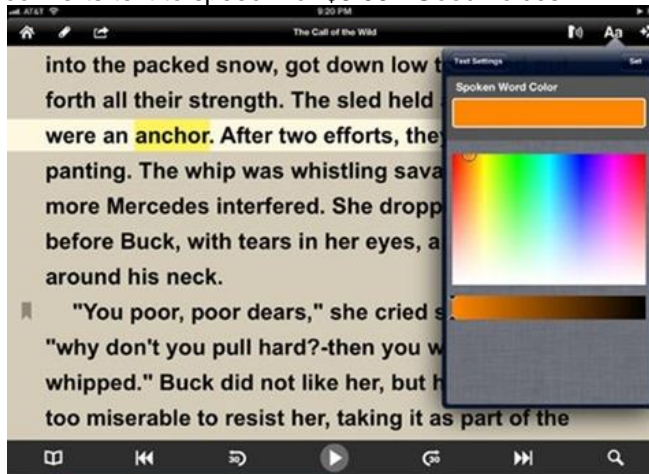
**iPad:** The built-in iPad app for reading materials on the tablet is called VoiceOver. It is set up through the Accessibility settings.



**Read2Go:** Another app for the iPad the reads text aloud is Read2Go (\$19.99). You download books and open them in the Read2Go app.



**Voice Dream Reader:** Also for the iPad. This app converts text to speech for \$9.99. Good voices.



## Topic Preview

Future issues of this newsletter will address:

- Parenting
- Self-Determination & Advocacy
- Sensory Efficiency
- Social Skills

## Past Topics

- Introduction to BVI
- Cortical Vision Impairment
- Living Skills
- Low Vision
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orientation & Mobility
- Recreation & Leisure
- Transition
- Braille
- Early Childhood Intervention
- Technology

## Skills Progression for Listening

Working toward independent use of listening skills for the purposes of home, the school classroom, studying, recreation and leisure, safety, and greater independence, each child with a vision impairment must be taught the skill sequence to make him/her more efficient. To develop good listening skills the following skills and concepts must be built with the child:

1. Auditory Reception
  - a. Existence of nonverbal sounds (objects, situations, human)
  - b. Existence of verbal sounds (someone is speaking)
2. Auditory Discrimination
  - a. Identify nonverbal sounds (objects, situations, human)
  - b. Identify verbal sounds (someone is speaking)
  - c. Sort out what sound is close and what sounds are far away
  - d. Localize (find it accurately) sound
3. Auditory Memory
  - a. Recall simple sounds/words (mimic, repeat, etc.)
4. Auditory Sequential Memory
  - a. Recall of sequential order (repeat a rhyme, song, story, etc.)
  - b. Arrange a group of items named by a speaker
5. Auditory Closure
  - a. Pick out the speaker in the room that you are to respond to from what is being said
  - b. Identify the response that should be used related to what was heard (sounds and voices)
  - c. Respond to the voice that is addressing you, and not to unrelated conversation, direction, discussion, etc.
6. Auditory Association
  - a. Choose specific words that go with the situation
7. Auditory Comprehension
  - a. Pick out the important points to remember of what was heard
  - b. Sort and categorize information
  - c. Associate information with past experience
  - d. Recall and repeat not only what was stated but also meant
  - e. Associate questions with what was heard

These skills are taught as the child progresses through the grades. You can help at home with skills that follow this progression.

