

FEED THE HUNGRY MONSTER

USING LISTENING AND PLAY TO TARGET USE OF CRITICAL ELEMENTS

THINK ABOUT . . .

A critical element is a piece of information that assists in distinguishing what is being discussed. It can be difficult for some children to remember more than one critical element (short-term memory). Start by presenting two options and asking for one item by using only one characteristic about it. For example, I could hold out two bears (one brown and the other white) and then state, "which one is the white bear". To expand on more critical elements, more items can be included that are similar so more information is needed to distinguish what is being talked about. For example, if there are multiple car toys on the floor you could ask "can I have the big, blue truck?" This requires the child to separate the toys into big and small, color, and whether one is a car or a truck.



ACTIVITY

- 1- Either spend some time making the monster with your child or have it set out with the "food" on a table or an area with lots of room.
- 2- Start by telling the child the monster is hungry and what it wants. This can look like: *I want a small apple* or *I want a blue square* or *I want a tall animal*.
- 3- Don't forget to make it fun! Make silly sounds as the monster eats, have it eat the food right out of child's hand.
- 4- If the child picks the wrong item, have the monster spit out the food and state what it was given vs what it wants. For example: *That was a green ball, I want a blue ball*.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- A tissue box without the plastic film
- Googly eyes, pompoms, etc.
- White paper for teeth
- Glue
- Anything that could be "food" for the monster and is small enough to fit in the tissue box opening.

PREPARATION:

- 1- You can make the tissue box monster beforehand or work on sequencing with your child for the steps to put it together.
- 2- Gather materials for the monster to "eat".

VOCABULARY:

- Pretend food items.
- Various toys to talk about item names, colors, shapes, and sizes.

HELPFUL TIPS:

- You can practice letting your child think of the critical elements instead of just listening to them by taking turns on who plays the monster and gets to say what the monster wants.
- If the child isn't understanding the difference, take some time to explain or go in a different direction. For example, if big and small are new concepts, try switching to using colors as another critical element.

Special thanks to graduate students in the Listening and Spoken Language Deaf Education graduate training program at Utah State University. These pages can be reproduced for educational purposes.

