

# Test Assistant: Visual Reinforcement Audiometry (VRA)

Visual reinforcement audiometry, often referred to as VRA, is a technique used to test the hearing of children from 6 months to 2 ½ years of age, to find the softest level that the child can hear for low, mid and high-pitched sounds. The child responds by turning their head when the sound is heard, and is reinforced with something visually interesting, such as an animated toy. For this technique is helpful to have a test assistant, and this role is often performed by a parent.

The test assistant helps the child learn to respond. Children often naturally look towards the sound when it is presented and the visual reinforcement helps maintain the child's interest. Sometimes though, children are less interested or need help initially connecting the sound with the reinforcement. The audiologist may ask you to show the child the reinforcer at first while the sound is being presented.

The test assistant helps to return the child's gaze forward after the head turn response using a quiet, visually interesting toy. Because children can tire of the task or lose interest quickly, having the child look forward after each response helps the audiologist get more complete testing results.

The test assistant helps minimize distractions during testing. Toys should be kept out of reach of the child, and out of sight when not in use. To help the child be prepared to respond, the child should be seated in a high chair with the parent positioned behind the child, or on the parent's lap seated slightly forward and not leaning back against the parent. People in the testing area can also distract the child, turn off your cell phone, and bring another adult who can stay with other siblings in the waiting area. During testing, be aware of your body language. Children watch what is happening around them and can be cued unintentionally if you start or stop a movement when a sound is presented.

Visual reinforcement audiometry is a technique used for children from 6 months to 2 ½ years of age. The parent often performs the role of the test assistant. The test assistant teaches the child to look at the reinforcer when a sound is heard, brings the child's gaze forward after a response, and minimizes distractions during testing.