

1 2 3 Eyes on Me

“1 2 3, eyes on me” is a call-and-response routine that helps children **pause, shift attention, and get ready** for directions. Like any classroom tool, it works best when it’s **taught, practiced, and used consistently**—not just shouted during chaos.

What You’re Teaching Kids to Do

When you say the phrase, children learn to:

- **Stop** what they’re doing (freeze)
- **Face the teacher** (or “eyes this way”)
- **Quiet voice**
- **Listening body** (hands still, feet still)

Tip: Some children may not make direct eye contact. “Face the teacher” or “show me you’re listening” can be more inclusive.

Step-by-Step: How to Implement It (3–5 days)

Day 1: Introduce (2 minutes)

1. Explain: “This is our class signal for ‘pause and listen.’”
2. Model: Show what your body looks like (still, facing forward, quiet).
3. Practice 3 times when kids are calm.

Script:

Teacher: “1-2-3, eyes on me!”

Children: “1-2-3, eyes on you!”

Teacher: “Thank you. That tells me you’re ready.”

Day 2: Add expectations (30 seconds)



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Add a simple chant or visual:

- “Freeze—Face—Quiet—Listen”

Day 3: Use it in low-stakes moments

Use it before a fun activity (story time, game, snack prep) so it feels successful.

Day 4–5: Use it for transitions

Use it for cleanup, lining up, and switching centers.

Practice So Kids Understand (Not Just Repeat)

Children show they understand when they can do it without reminders. Try:

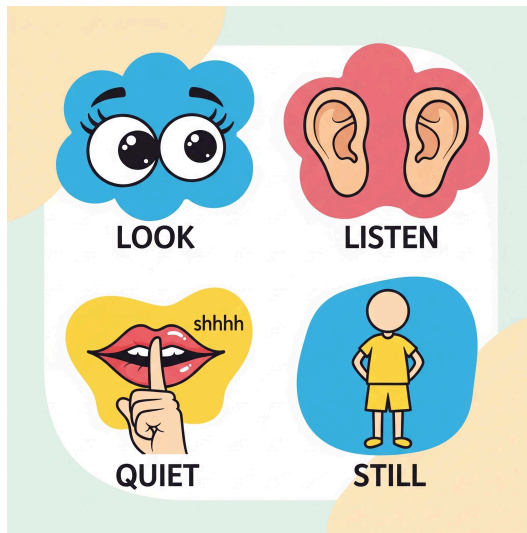
- “Show me” practice: “Show me a listening body in 3...2...1.”
- Role-play: “What does it look like when someone is ready? Not ready?”
- Quick game: “When you hear the signal, freeze like a statue.”

Visual supports that help



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When to Use It (Best Times)

Use it when you need whole-group attention:

- Before giving directions
- At the start of circle time
- During cleanup and transitions
- When volume rises
- For safety moments (doors, outdoor line-up)

When NOT to use it

- When only 1–2 children need redirection (use proximity or a quiet reminder)
- During big emotions/meltdowns (co-regulate first)
- So often that it becomes background noise



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How Long Should It Take?

A realistic goal:

- Preschool: 5–10 seconds
- School-age: 3–7 seconds
If it regularly takes longer, reteach and simplify expectations.

Tips for Making It “Stick”

- Say it once and then pause (don’t repeat immediately).
- Reinforce the first responders: “I see three friends ready—thank you.”
- Keep your tone calm. The goal is regulation, not control.
- Be consistent: same cue + same response + same expectation.
- Use it before you lose them: call attention early in transitions.

Common Problems (and Fixes)

“They ignore it.”

- Reteach during calm time.
- Practice with a “challenge”: “Let’s do it in 5 seconds.”



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- Use proximity: stand near the noisiest area before the cue.

“They shout the response.”

- Teach a whisper version and practice it as a game.
- Praise quiet: “I love how you used an inside voice.”

“It takes too long.”

- Reduce expectations to 3:
Freeze / Face / Quiet
- Add a visual and point to it.
- Reset: “Let’s try again. This time, freeze first.”

“Some children won’t make eye contact.”

- Use: “Eyes this way” or “Bodies facing me.”
- Accept alternative listening behaviors (still hands, quiet voice, facing forward).

Age-Based Adjustments

Toddlers (1–2)

Focus on the action, not the words:

- Teacher: “1-2-3, eyes on me!” + point to your eyes + “hands quiet.”
- Celebrate partial success: “You stopped—thank you!”



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Preschool/Pre-K (3–5)

Perfect for call-and-response + visuals. Keep it playful but consistent.

School Age (6+)

Use a “cooler” version sometimes:

- “Class, class.” / “Yes, yes.”
- “If you can hear me, clap once.”



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