

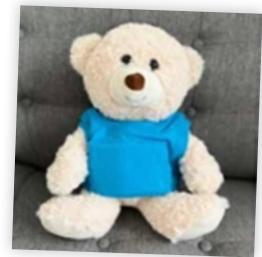
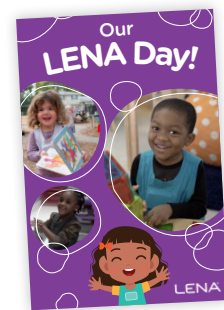
Meet the LENA Vest

Some children may be excited to wear a vest, some may not give it much thought, and others may be hesitant or opposed. Here are some ideas designed to help everyone feel good about their vest.

Note: It's important to follow the child's lead. If a child remains opposed to wearing a vest even after trying the suggestions below, follow their lead and try again next week.

Introduce the vest before the first LENA Day

- Read the [Our LENA Day story](#) and introduce the vest.
- Pass vests around to give children a chance to touch, feel, and explore the material.
- Older children may also benefit from the chance to touch, feel, and explore a device.
- Start with a peer leader who is unlikely to refuse the vest. The other children may follow this child's example.
- Consider having children wear vests without devices a few days in advance of the first LENA Day. Start with a short amount of time and build up to longer periods.
- Dress a familiar stuffie or doll in an extra vest first to help children feel that it is safe.
- Teachers can wear "vests," too! Just remove the sleeves from a t-shirt of similar color. (One program even added a pocket with snaps!)



On LENA Days

Here are some creative approaches that real teachers have implemented with success.

- LENA Days = superhero days! Vests are capes, devices are "the power." Messages like, "To stay a superhero, we must leave the power alone" may help with wandering fingers. Try this idea with whatever engages the children — robots, dinosaurs, detectives, etc.
- Express yourself! Allow children to bedazzle their own vests with stickers, appliques, or fabric paints. Add extra fabrics a cape, tutu, or animal tail. **Note:** Avoid embellishing or

altering the pocket in any way to ensure the mic can still “hear!”

- Name game! Children who are developing print recognition may enjoy searching for and finding their own name among all the devices and all the vests, and as a result may feel proud to put theirs on. Teachers can scaffold children as they might for any early literacy activity: make it a matching game with a name card, look for just the first letter, or pair with a colored shape that belongs to just that child.
- Engage parents! Parents who are excited and on-board can be very effective at getting buy in from children.
 - Children may resist covering up a new or favorite outfit. Encourage parents to send their child to the center wearing a plain or “boring shirt” on LENA Day — not a favorite dinosaur, princess, or character shirt!
 - Encourage parents to talk about the upcoming LENA Day while en route to the classroom or to assist with putting on the vest.
- Make it musical! Eva Jenkins, LENA Grow Coach in Tenn., created LENA lyrics using the tune of Farmer in the Dell:

We listen when we talk.
We listen, then we know.
We listen, and we share,
And together we will grow.
The more we will talk,
The more we'll understand.
We're happy when we know,
So take my hand.

Tips for putting the device in the vest

Option: Under wraps. On LENA Days, start the recording and load the device in the pocket without the child seeing. The children may realize the vest contains “something,” but it may not occur to them that the “thing” is separate or can come out. This approach may work best for younger children.

Option: Full disclosure. Some children feel most comfortable if they can fully explore what’s in the pocket. An opportunity to touch and feel the device ahead of time can help lessen both interest and anxiety. Then on LENA Day it can be left alone because it’s really pretty boring!

No one strategy will work for all children. Teachers can adjust the approach based on their classroom culture and their expert knowledge of their children’s personalities and needs.