

# Supporting Understanding of Language

Understanding language involves different skills including; listening and attending to what has been said; remembering what was said; understanding what the words mean (vocabulary); understanding the word order (grammar); using facial expression, gesture and body language to add meaning.

## Strategies

- Reduce distractions and find a quiet and calm place when talking, this will help your child to pay attention
- Keep your language simple and be ready to repeat
- Give your child chance to understand what you have said (wait 10 seconds before repeating what you have said)
- Use gestures and actions to support understanding
- If they don't understand show them
- Chunk long instructions into small parts e.g. instead of "get your coat and shoes and wait by the door", try "get your coat", then "get your shoes" finally "wait by the door". Give the instruction in the correct order, check they have understood by asking them what they have to do.
- Emphasise the key word/points
- Children typically understand question words in the following order:
  1. What? Where?
  2. Who?
  3. Why? How? When?

## Games/activities

**Sharing books-** Look at a book together and talk about the picture or the story they have heard. Use simple "wh" questions e.g. "what is the bear doing?" or "who ate the porridge?" Find props or toys that go with the story to bring the story to life. Try asking them to use the toys to act out parts of the story.

**Obstacle course** - Set up a simple obstacle course and take it in turns to give or follow the instructions, increase the length of the instructions to make it more difficult.

**Barrier games** - Create a barrier between you (use a big book) both of you will have the same objects on each side. Give instructions such as "put little teddy

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in the bed". Then remove the barrier and see if you have both done the same things.

Within games like this it is important to have choices so the child has to use their understanding in order to get it correct. So you may have a big and little teddy, a bed and a chair on each side of the barrier. These types of games can be done with as little as some coloured crayons and a piece of paper e.g. "Draw a little yellow star" or "draw a blue and green tree".

**Introduce simple instructions into play-** Use their favourite play activities to introduce instructions. For example if they are playing with the dolls you could ask them to "wash/brush the dolly/teddy's hand/feet/tummy" ensuring there is a choice between teddy, dolly, sponge and brush etc.

**Follow the leader-** Ask the child to do as you say e.g. "touch your nose and sit down, the instructions can be increased in length as the child succeeds. They could also try doing the actions with a favourite character toy e.g. "make teddy jump on the table"

## Apps to try

Splingo's Language Universe

Auditory Workout

Key Word Kids

Following Directions (I can do apps)

Following Instructions (I can do apps)

Language Forest (Pocket SLP)

## Useful websites:

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)

[www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk)

[www.languageforlearning.co.uk](http://www.languageforlearning.co.uk)

**Books:** 'Communication Cookbook'