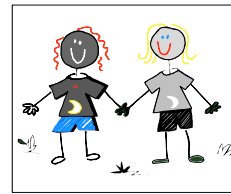


Information and advice from:



**Early Development and
Inclusion Team**
Supporting Inclusion at the Early
Years Foundation Stage



Developing understanding

Every sentence you speak has a number of 'key' words that your child needs to understand in order to follow an instruction. These are the words that carry meaning. *But* be aware, if you're holding your child's coat and say 'Put your coat on', your child does *not* need to understand any of the words because they can see what you're asking them to do. This is called *situational understanding* where children use the context to know what to do.

To be sure your child understands the 'key' words, there needs to be a choice of object or action. For example, if you hold a coat *and* shoes, your child would then need to understand the word 'coat' to be able to follow your request.

It's important to know what words your child understands so you can support their developing understanding at the right stage.

Try these play activities; the 'key' words in each sentence are underlined.

Understanding one word

Choose 3-4 familiar toys or objects, such as, a ball, a teddy, a spoon, and a cup. You can put them in a box or bag to gain your child's interest. It's important to explore the objects together first. Comment as you play together and name the objects and actions, e.g. "You've found the ball', 'I've got a spoon', 'Look, teddy's jumping'.

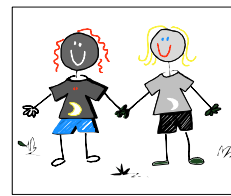
Once you've had time to play with the toys, encourage your child to stop and listen.

- **Finding an object** - Set out 2-3 of the objects, then ask: 'Where's the ball?' or 'Find teddy', or 'Give me the spoon'.
- **Understanding action words** - Give your child teddy and say: 'Can teddy jump?', or 'Make teddy eat', or 'Teddy wants a drink'



You can use gesture or signs initially, to help them to succeed. But gradually reduce the support as they learn to listen and understand the words.

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Understanding two words

Once your child confidently understands one 'key' word, add a few more options to the play, such as, a doll, a plate, a brick and a toy bed. Again, explore the toys together and comment, e.g. 'That's teddy's nose', 'Dolly's in the bed', 'Dolly's eating', 'Look, the spoon's on the plate'.

Once you've had time to play with the toys, encourage your child to stop and listen.

- **Learning about possessives** - Give your child the teddy *and* the doll and ask: 'Where's teddy's eyes?' or 'Show me dolly's nose.' Your child may show you on both teddy and dolly to start with until they learn to listen and understand both 'key' words.
- **Relating object to object** - Set out the spoon, cup, brick, and plate. Ask your child to: 'Put the brick in the cup' or 'Put the spoon on the plate.' Now your child needs to listen and choose between the brick/spoon and cup/plate.
- **Relating object to verb** - Give your child the teddy *and* doll and ask your child to: 'Make dolly sit down', 'Can teddy jump?', 'Let's make dolly sleep.' Here your child needs to choose between the teddy and doll and understand the action word too.



Understanding three words

Once your child confidently understands two 'key' words, it's time to extend the language and introduce some concepts. This can take a little time and practise to master.

Remember, there always needs to be a choice of objects and/or action.

- **Understanding object function** - add a brush and flannel to the play with teddy *and* doll and ask: 'Can you wash dolly's hands, or 'brush teddy's ears.'
- **Learning positional vocabulary** - Make sure they understand in/on/under first, then ask your child to: 'Put the spoon on the plate' or 'Hide the brick under the cup.'
- **Introducing the concept of size** - add some different size toys to the play e.g. a big *and* small teddy, together with a big *and* small doll. Ask your child to: 'Give the plate to the big teddy' or 'Give the spoon to the small doll.'



Always model the language first to be sure your child understands the word for each object, action or concept, before using it in the activity.