

CHILDREN'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SERVICE

Helping your child understand language

Understanding of language (or language comprehension) means understanding the spoken word.

This is different to understanding how things work or what they are used for (e.g. knowing how to work the iPad).

In the early stages of language development children pick up meaning from all the cues around them, e.g. they know it is time for lunch when they see their bowl on the table but might not yet understand the word "lunchtime" (this is situational understanding).

Some children can find it difficult to understand words, follow instructions or respond to questions.

They may repeat back the words you used and can become upset or frustrated when they don't understand.

To help your child learn new words and support their understanding of instructions follow our top tips...

- 1) Get your child's attention before talking to them, say their name and get down to their level
- 2) Give short and simple instructions → keeping sentences short helps your child remember what you have asked them to do.
- 3) Repeat important words → if your child is having difficulty with understanding then saying the key words in a phrase again may help.
- 4) Give one instruction at a time → don't 'overload' your child with information. Give the information in chunks or make sure they have carried out one instruction before giving them another.



Get your coat....coat
on....scarf on...time to go to
school



It's cold today so go and get
your coat and scarf because
it's time for school and we're
going to walk there now

5) Use actions / gestures when talking as this will support what you say, for example when you say "get me your shoes" point to their shoes. (Using a signing system can help children learning new words. For more information visit the 'Makaton' or 'Signalong' website)

6) Don't ask too many questions. By not asking lots of questions this can take the pressure off your child. Instead talk about what you are doing; this creates more language opportunities as you are introducing them to lots of vocabulary instead!

Pointers for nursery and school:

- Instructions given to the whole group may need to be given individually for children who need support to understand language
- The child may cope better once they have picked up the routine
- The child may watch other children to help them understand what to do
- Situations that involve listening to language may be difficult, e.g. story time, circle time
- All of the above tips can help, especially using lots of visual cues such as gesture and objects or pictures

For more information visit www.alderhey.nhs.uk or talk to your Speech and Language Therapist

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