

Understanding language

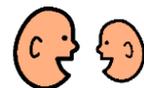
Some children have difficulty understanding spoken language. This may be described as *receptive language difficulties*. These children may have difficulty following instructions or understanding long or complex sentences. They may find it harder to remember and process information and to learn new words.



Understanding spoken language is crucial for all aspects of language and learning. There are lots of ways we can support children to understand spoken language.

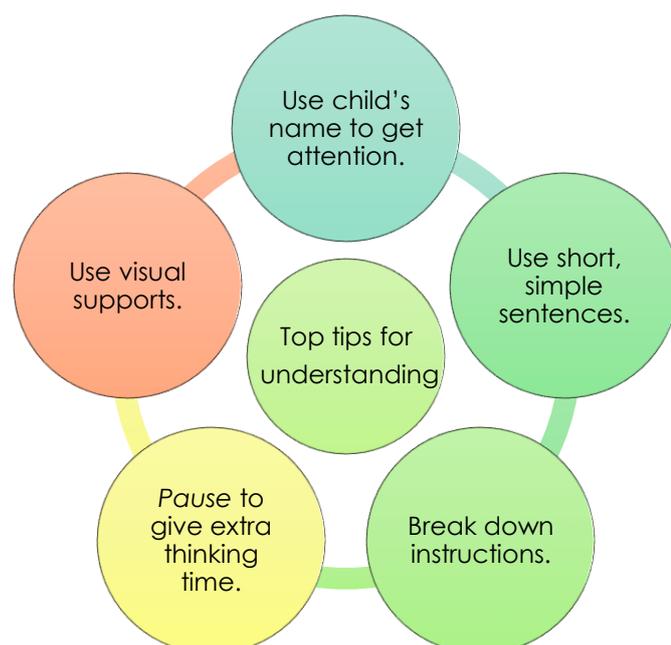
Strategies to support understanding:

- Get your child's attention before speaking or giving an instruction. **Say their name** first so that they know to listen.
- **Simplify** what you say. Use short, simple sentences and break instructions down into smaller parts (e.g. 'Go and get your shoes and coat and wait by the door' → 'Get your shoes. Now get your coat. Now wait by the door.').
- **Pause and wait.** Slow down your talking and give your child plenty of thinking time. Pause between sentences to give extra time to process information.
- **Repeat** to reinforce what you have said.
- **Use visual supports.** Our body language, facial expressions and gestures all reinforce the words we say. Visual supports such as objects, pictures and symbols can support understanding. Spoken language disappears quickly while visual information stays for longer!
- Use **multi-sensory learning.** When introducing new words or concepts, use real, hands on experiences to support word learning.



See [Speech and Language UK](https://www.speechandlanguageuk.com/) for more information and tips for supporting young children's understanding of words and sentences.

Speech and Language UK



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