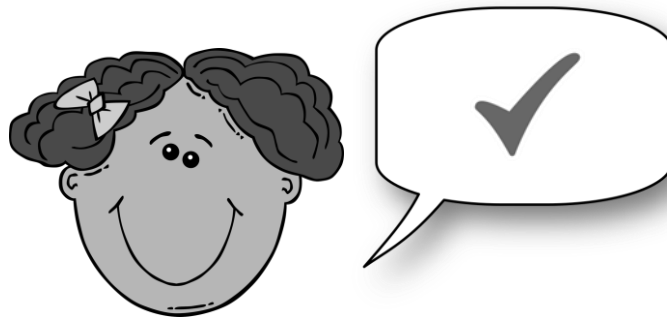


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Charity No. 1045617

Helping your school age child to
understand what you say



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Understanding what others say involves many different elements, for example:

- ✓ understanding tone of voice, facial expression, gestures & body language
- ✓ understanding the words used
- ✓ understanding the way that words are put together
- ✓ understanding the meaning in a specific situation

Children who find it difficult to understand what others say, may struggle with these elements and over-rely on the visual clues in the situation around them.

Please note some children may have clear speech and are able to put words together to talk themselves but still find it difficult to understand others. It can be tricky to spot the underlying needs of these children.

A child who finds it difficult to understand what others say may also find it difficult to:

- ➡ Pay attention when you talk
- ➡ Listen to you explaining something or to a story
- ➡ Follow instructions
- ➡ Play or work co-operatively & join in conversations
- ➡ Understand what he/she is reading

If you are concerned about your child's talking, seek advice from a qualified speech and language therapist.

Read this leaflet for general ideas of how you can help your child to understand.

Help your child to understand what you say

Make it easier to listen by reducing background noise or finding a quiet corner to talk in. Use your child's name and encourage your child to look at you. Slightly slow down your speech. Use pointing and gesture to add visual clues.

Build in longer pauses when you speak to allow plenty of time for your child to take in and think about what you have said. Your child may need 5-10 seconds!

Use shorter sentences.

"In a minute dinner will be ready so, before you sit at the table, I want you to tidy your Lego away and then wash your hands."

Instead break it down into smaller steps:

"Tidy your Lego.
Wash your hands."

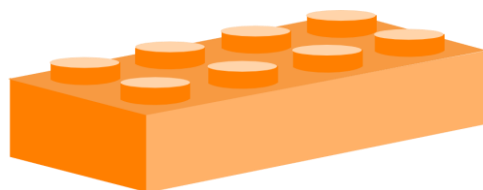
Avoid using 'before' and 'after'

These words can confuse a child as they can change the order of an instruction without changing the order of the words:

"Before you wash your hands, I want you to tidy your Lego."

Instead use first and next.

"First tidy your Lego. Next wash your hands."

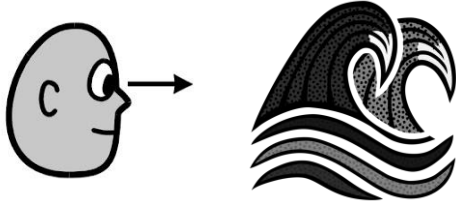


Identify new or more complex words.

Explain what abstract words mean. Make links between new words and ideas that your child already knows. You can use drawing and images to support.

'Where'..." a question word asking about a place."

"There's 'sea' at the beach, and you 'see' with your eyes."



'Adapt'...' means change something for a new situation...*adapt* a book to make it into a film."

'Terrified'...' means very scared."

Encourage your child to spot words that they're not sure about.

Sometimes a child doesn't know a word, but often has heard it before or knows something about it. Make it fun by pretending to be word detectives! Praise your child for asking or checking what a word means. Let them know its ok to say 'I don't understand'.

Explain non-literal expressions or when meaning needs to be worked out in a situation.

- He's feeling under the weather
- I'm running late
- Keep your head down
- "It's very hot in here" (might mean open the window)

Check your child has understood an instruction by observing what they do or asking them to repeat back to you, in their own words, what they need to do.

Watch a favourite TV programme together.

Talk about what happened and any words or expressions used that might need explaining. You can comment rather than ask questions.

For example: "He said 'Oh that's just great!' but his face didn't look happy."