

Understanding of Language

For the Younger Child



Tips to help your child at home

Information Leaflet

What is understanding of language?

Understanding of spoken language is also known as receptive language. Receptive language is the ability to understand words, sentences and instructions. This develops continuously from birth through to adulthood.

It involves:

at first

- Understanding a wide range of words including names of objects, action words, and concepts e.g. big, heavy, long, fast.

secondly

- Understanding longer sentences

thirdly

- Understanding more complex sentences and short stories
- The ability to understand spoken language requires good attention and listening skills.
- Appropriate understanding of language is essential for your child to successfully access the curriculum.



How do I know if my child is having difficulties in understanding language?

Your child may:-

- Need instructions repeated.
- Only follow part of an instruction, get mixed up, or carry out instruction incorrectly.

- Rely on routines or other clues to help with understanding e.g. "Put your socks on then your shoes" because that is the usual routine. They may look and copy what the other children are doing.
- Appear disruptive in class when they have not understood.
- Hide their difficulty by talking constantly.

How can I support my child's understanding of language?

- Get your child's full attention when speaking with them- establish good eye contact, call their name.
- Use short, simple, repetitive sentences
- Emphasise important words in your instruction by increasing the volume and stress.
- Minimise distractions e.g. turn off the T.V.
- Allow your child time to process your question/instruction before saying it again.
- Use gestures, pictures or symbols to help show your child what you mean.
- Do not bombard your child with language they do not understand as they may "switch off" and stop listening.

Activities and games to develop receptive language

Here are some activities you can do which will help develop your child's understanding of language:-

- **Shopping Games:** When out shopping with your child ask them to get you two things you need. Gradually increase the number of items you ask for.

- **Sorting Games:** Choose everyday objects e.g. teddy, hat, cup. Put them on the table and ask your child to find the one you wear, play with etc...



- **Story Time:** Read a story with your child and ask them some questions e.g. What did the caterpillar eat? Where did teddy go?
- **Listening Games:** Play “Simon Says” with your child e.g. “Simon Says touch your toes”. Make it more difficult by making instructions longer e.g. “Touch your nose and clap your hands”.



If you have any queries about the information in this leaflet or would like further advice, please contact your local RISE NI team: