

Strategies to Develop Receptive Language Skills at Home

Receptive language refers to your child's understanding of the language they hear around them. Some children may have difficulties following instructions, understanding vocabulary terms, understanding concept language and understanding question words. Attention and listening skills can also impact on your child's understanding of language. The following strategies can be used at home to help your child develop their receptive language skills:

- Make sure your child is cued in and listening before giving them an instruction. You can call their name and make sure they're looking at you before asking them to do something. Reduce background noise and distractions where possible. Some children find it difficult to listen in busy, noisy environments.
- Keep instructions short and simple when possible. The level of understanding will depend on each individual child and their age – younger children will often find it difficult to follow complex instructions with lots of information (e.g. 'put the **big red ball in the blue box**') and more than one instruction at once (e.g. 'pick up a worksheet after you have found a partner').
- Repeat instructions or simplify them if your child is having difficulty understanding them. For longer instructions, it is likely that younger children will need to hear the instruction more than once to follow it successfully. Allow extra time for your child to process complex information.
- Check that your child has understood by asking them to explain to you what they need to do.
- Use visual information (such as pictures, objects and real-life examples) alongside spoken information to support understanding. For example, if you are teaching your child the meaning of the concept 'in front of', it is helpful to use real objects or toys to model this.
- Avoid using metaphors, sarcasm or non-literal language (e.g. 'pull your socks up' and 'it's raining cats and dogs') as these are difficult to interpret the meaning of.



- Barrier games are a great way to practise following instructions. These are games where a barrier (a large book/cushion) is placed between the two players so that you cannot see each other's resources, and you both have the same picture/objects in front of you. The players take turns to give each other instructions to complete an activity. Some examples of barrier games you could play at home are:
 - o Building a lego model
 - o Completing a craft activity e.g. playdough model, making a paper crown
 - o Drawing a simple picture
 - o Battleships game

If your child is having difficulties following your instruction, try repeating the instruction or simplifying it for them.

- During reading practise at home, encourage your child to develop their understanding of question words by talking about the pictures. Younger children will need to be asked simpler questions such as who? what? and where?, whereas older children may be able to answer more complex why? and how? questions. For example 'why do you think that happened?' and 'how does the boy feel?', as well as 'what will happen next?'
- When learning new vocabulary terms at home, only focus on a few new words at a time so as not to overload your child. Using mind maps can be a helpful way to explore the meaning of new words by answering questions such as:
 - o What do we do with it?
 - o What does it look like/feel like/sound like?
 - o Where do you find it?
 - o What category does it belong to?
 - o What sound does it start with?
 - o How many beats are there in the word?
 - o What words does it rhyme with?

Children learn new words better when they learn through a multisensory approach. For example, being able to look at pictures of a new object or touch it in front of them, using their senses to explore a new object, try out using the objects, practise saying/writing the word and using it in a sentence.

- Recap new words regularly to consolidate your child's knowledge and use words across different contexts when you can. For example, if your child is learning the word 'temperature', you might use it to talk about how warm/cold it is outside,

when taking your temperature if you are feeling poorly, talking about the temperature in the car whilst driving to school etc.

- There are lots of simple word games that you can play at home to develop your child's understanding of vocabulary. These games are great for car journeys, or to play as part of your daily routine e.g. whilst walking to school, at bath time etc.
 - o Word description game – can they guess a word from your description?
 - o Word association game - can they think of a word which links to the last word they heard? E.g. car – wheel – bus – red – apple – banana
 - o Word bluff game – give three possible definitions of the word. Can they choose the correct definition?
 - o True or false game – give a possible fact about the word. Can they identify if it is true or false?