

Top Tips for Helping Children Understand

Some children find it difficult to understand what is being said to them. It is important that adults are aware of children who may need some extra help with understanding instructions and what is being said to them. Try these top tips to help children to understand.

1. Length of instructions

Keep instructions short, 'chunking' information into shorter, more manageable amounts:

e.g. "go and get your jumper and shoes and then line up at the door" could be broken down into "go and get your jumper", "now get your shoes", and then "now line up at the door".

2. Speed of speech

Slow down your speech and allow lots of time for the child to process what has been said.

3. Repetition

Repeat information and instructions, but do not change the language when repeating what has already been said.

4. Vocabulary

Be aware of the words you are using – using unfamiliar or complex vocabulary will make it more difficult for the child to understand what is being said.

5. Attention

Ensure you have the child's attention before giving an instruction by saying their name and gaining eye contact.

6. Visual support

Use pictures, symbols or written words to reinforce verbal language. For example, for younger children, use gesture, or a symbol or picture of a coat alongside the instruction 'go and get your coat', or for older children, write down the steps they need to follow to complete their work task, or use picture sequences.

Spoken language goes away as soon as the instruction is finished. Visuals remain for children to refer back to if needed.

