

WellComm

A Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years: Revised Edition.

The Big Book of Ideas

*Activities for Building
Children's Language Skills*





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The Big Book of Ideas

Activities for Building Children's Language Skills

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

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Published by GL Assessment.

1st Floor, Vantage London, Great West Road, Brentford, TW8 9AG.

www.gl-assessment.co.uk

GL Assessment is part of GL Education.

ISBN: 978-0-7087-2380-7 5(6.19)



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Acknowledgements

The original WellComm research and development team (Bryony Aitken, Jennifer Casson, Roger Holder (statistician), Angela Hurd and Diana McQueen) would like to acknowledge the help and support of many people, including:

The Sandwell Speech and Language Therapy Department:

Karen Hoar
Safia Mun
Justin Drew
Nibbhaya
Chris Robinson
Lynne Cotterill
Neil Revel

The Sandwell 'Time to Talk' Team:

Andrea Dawson
Rita Wiseman
Gaynor Martin
Nicola Plant
Tharmista Patel
Kulbinder Thandi
Liz Gowans
Harmish Dhaliwal
Kelly Perrott

The Sandwell Data Intelligence Team:

BHP Limited (DVD production)
Alan Birch (artist)

We would also like to thank the many children, their parents and early years practitioners from a wide range of settings (maintained and non-maintained) who took part in the research and development programme, used WellComm, gave us feedback and who made it all possible, including those from:

Jubilee Park Primary School
Old Park Primary School
Summerhill Primary School
Joseph Turner Primary School, especially
Rebecca Langley, the Foundation Stage
Manager
Ocker Hill Infant School
Highfields Primary School
Rowley Hall Primary School
St Margaret's CE Primary School

Annie Lennard Infant School
Sadwica Nursery
Lilliput Lodge Nursery School
Victoria Infant School
Mesty Croft School
Hall Green School
Brasshouse Primary School
Hateley Heath Primary School
Victoria House Day Nursery

Wellcomm Age Guide

The following table shows the age bands covered by each Section of the Big Book of Ideas. Please use the guidance provided to determine the appropriate Sections and activities.

Section	Age in Months	Age in Years
1	6–11	0:5–0:11
2	12–17	1:0–1:5
3	18–23	1:6–1:11
4	24–29	2:0–2:5
5	30–35	2:6–2:11
6	36–41	3:0–3:5
7	42–47	3:6–3:11
8	48–59	4:0–4:11
9	60–72	5:0–6:0

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Introduction

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Introduction

What is *The Big Book of Ideas*?

The Big Book of Ideas is exactly that – a comprehensive selection of activities to help develop and improve children’s speech and language skills at any age from 6 months to 6 years. The activities are designed to be implemented by any early years practitioner (including child minders, nursery workers, health visitors and teachers) using toys and items that can be readily found in all early years settings. Speech and language therapists may also find the activities helpful in their work.

The Big Book of Ideas is an essential part of the WellComm Toolkit. Used initially as a Screening Tool, WellComm identifies young children at risk of having difficulty in developing language skills. Once a child’s language has been assessed and benchmarked using the Screening Tool, the next step is to introduce specific strategies that can help extend and improve the child’s language skills, whatever their level. *The Big Book of Ideas* does this by providing a large number of focused intervention activities specifically designed to promote language development through play.

Using *The Big Book of Ideas*

If a child has been screened using the WellComm Screening Tool, a profile based on a traffic-light rating system is produced: Green, Amber or Red.

- Children who attain a score in the Red band are those most likely to need intervention from a specialist service.
- Children who fall within the Amber band are those for whom extra support may be enough to help them develop age-appropriate language skills.
- Children who attain a score in the Green band are not considered in need of any extra input or assessment at the moment.

Once a child has been screened and a profile established, it is easy to see where individual communication needs lie. Children at all ages and stages of development (including those who have not been screened using WellComm) can benefit from the ideas contained within *The Big Book of Ideas*, but it is important to personalise teaching strategies to meet any needs that have been identified and to follow activities that correspond to the child’s language level. This will not necessarily be the same as the child’s chronological age. It is possible to identify the appropriate teaching goals by looking at the strengths and weaknesses in the child’s profile. As a rule of thumb, the practitioner is encouraged to select the activities in the section just *above* where the child achieves a Green code in the WellComm Screening Tool. This is done by looking at the section where a Green score is achieved. For example:

Green Code	Activity
Section 3	Section 4
Section 4	Section 5
Section 5	Section 6

The WellComm profile can therefore help you decide which children need specific intervention, although all children's language can benefit from the activities included in this book. It can also help you identify the items that the child did not achieve by signposting appropriate activities in *The Big Book of Ideas*. This helps identify specific areas of need as highlighted by the child's profile and, by choosing the corresponding activities, helps 'fill in the gaps'. Thus target setting is made easier and geared closely to the needs of the individual.

The Big Book of Ideas can also be used to help improve the language skills of children who have not been assessed with the WellComm Screening Tool. In this situation, age-appropriate activities can be selected, using the table below as a guide, and by following the ideas on how to make each activity easier ('Step down') or more difficult ('Step up') as required. If these activities prove too difficult, simply drop down to the next section until a suitable level can be found.

Section	Age (in months)	Age (in years / months)
1	6–11	0:6–0:11
2	12–17	1:0–1:5
3	18–23	1:6–1:11
4	24–29	2:0–2:5
5	30–35	2:6–2:11
6	36–41	3:0–3:5
7	42–47	3:6–3:11
8	48–59	4:0–4:11
9	60–72	5:0–6:0

The play-based activities are written to be followed during one-to-one sessions with a particular child; however, they can (and should be) easily adapted for use with small groups. If you wish to provide some teaching in small groups, you could try organising children in your setting according to their language level. Many of the interventions relate to activities already carried out in the classroom (e.g. story time) and *The Big Book of Ideas* can provide additional advice on how to tailor the activities to the children's language needs.

The activities can be used in a variety of ways:

- with a specific child
- in small groups
- integrated into any early years setting by learning through play.

Each section uses a specific colour that matches the colour of the Screening Tool record forms. This is to help guide you easily from the WellComm Screening Tool to the corresponding section in *The Big Book of Ideas*.

To help you quickly find your way around, each section follows the same format:

- The title describes the *aim* of the activity.
- ‘*Why is this important?*’ describes the rationale behind the aim so that you can be sure that the reasoning is sound and the activity meets individual needs.
- ‘*What to do*’ outlines how to carry out the activity.
- Each activity can be differentiated for each child and advice is provided on how to do this:
 - ★ ‘*Step up*’ increases the challenge by suggesting activities which have a similar aim but are more demanding because the contexts are varied and of increasing complexity. This mirrors how language skills develop – specific structures are learnt and then used in a myriad of different and creative ways and circumstances to reflect the richness, diversity and subtlety of language.
 - ★ ‘*Step down*’ makes the activity easier for children who find the target being introduced too difficult.

The concept of ‘stepping’ enables differentiation to meet the needs of each individual child. Lots of activities are suggested within each target:

- First, try the activity under ‘What to do’.
- If appropriate, make it easier by ‘stepping down’.
- Or ‘Step up’ and present some of the more challenging activities.

‘Stepping’ is the bridge between the ‘prescriptive’ nature of *The Big Book of Ideas* and how it relates to the sections of the WellComm Screening Tool, and your own skills, confidence and experience in being able to identify a child’s level. For more information about teaching strategies, when to recognise that a target is either too easy or too hard, or when to change tack, refer to Chapter 6 ‘Supporting children’s language’ in the WellComm *Handbook*.

Once you are familiar with the target skills that underpin the activities, you will easily be able to:

- Refer to lots of other available materials which will add variety to your WellComm sessions.
- Embed the WellComm philosophy into everyday early years activities. What do *your* children like to do? Use the ideas in this book to make language learning through play even more focused and fun!

Using *The Big Book of Ideas* at home

The Big Book of Ideas is designed to help practitioners guide parents to support their child's development at home. The activities have been written to be jargon-free and easy-to-use, and are photocopiable so that they can be easily shared with parents in their current form. Or the practitioner may choose to focus on one particular strategy and demonstrate how it can be used. It is also useful and can be very beneficial to ask the parent/s how they deal with these issues at home. The importance of involving parents and including them within activities is highlighted throughout the WellComm Toolkit.

Please note the term 'parent/s' is used throughout this book as a collective term to refer to the main caregiver/s of the child (i.e. parent/s, carer/s or guardian/s).

Other things to try

In addition to the activities highlighted for each target, suggestions are made within each age band about other areas that are important for language to develop. These include further aspects of concept development, extending the number of information carrying words processed, developing listening skills and social interaction.

Additional activities

As language develops through interaction with others, additional activities are also included in some sections which can be easily adapted to any setting. These include activities linked to popular early years toys and games (e.g. puzzles, the toy farm and the slide). They further encourage the development of language in a naturalistic setting and provide a wealth of suggestions to promote functional language and pragmatic skills.

General strategies

As well as the bespoke and customised activities recommended in *The Big Book of Ideas*, there are a number of different strategies that an early years practitioner can use to help improve a child's language skills. These are of a more general nature than the specific target areas set for each individual child following screening, and can be used as part of the overall intervention approach in providing a communication-rich environment. These are described here as 'general strategies' and provide guidance for children who present with speech sound difficulties, attention and listening difficulties and stammering. They represent examples of best practice and teaching techniques that have been tried and tested with a range of children in different settings.

These general strategies have purposefully been placed towards the end of *The Big Book of Ideas* because they are much less specific and are designed to encourage language development in everyday contexts. Initially, you may find it easier to focus on 'SMART' targets (see the WellComm *Handbook*, page 14) using highly structured tasks before developing the confidence to adapt and integrate general strategies into your daily routine.

A checklist for getting started

Use this simple checklist to get the most out of the activities included in *The Big Book of Ideas*:

- ✓ Aim to work in a quiet place with limited background noise and distractions.
 - ★ Turn the television/radio off.
- ✓ Be prepared – collect toys/equipment together before collecting the child!
- ✓ Whenever possible, carry out the activities with an adult who is familiar to the child.
 - ★ Keeping the same adult working with a child enables progress to be monitored more effectively.
- ✓ Make sure the child is ready and isn't tired.
 - ★ Work together *after* toilet and snack time.
- ✓ Work or sit on the same level as the child.
- ✓ Always model or demonstrate the activity first.
- ✓ Plan activities around the child's attention level.
 - ★ If the child can attend for five minutes, do the activity for five minutes.
 - ★ Change activities regularly to increase attention.
- ✓ Match the language ability of the child.
 - ★ Keep instructions clear and simple.
 - ★ Use familiar words.
 - ★ Match the amount you say to the child's level of understanding.
- ✓ Use the child's interests.
 - ★ For example, if Bob the Builder is a favourite, use Bob and Wendy.
- ✓ 'Prompting' helps the child to work out what to do (and is better than doing it *for* him/her!). Lots of things are helpful prompts:
 - ★ Repeating instructions.
 - ★ Demonstrating the task – an adult or child can be used to do this.
 - ★ Pointing.
 - ★ Physically guiding the child's hand.
 - ★ Using gestures or signs (e.g. Makaton, Signalong, B.S.L.).
 - ★ Giving choices, i.e. the correct answer and one wrong answer *for* the child to choose between (e.g. 'Is it a pencil or a cup?').

- ✓ When using questions, remember to be more reflective and less directive!
- ✓ Praise the child and give feedback.
 - ★ Make sure feedback is accurate and truthful but not negative (i.e. if the child performs a task incorrectly, don't say 'well done' but 'you tried very hard').
 - ★ Reward the child appropriately (e.g. verbal praise, choosing a toy to play together, a trip to the park, attention).
- ✓ Repeat activities often.
 - ★ Children love repetition.
 - ★ The child will make faster progress if the activities are practised frequently.
 - ★ Practise in a variety of contexts (i.e. home/school/playground).
 - ★ Using groups can help children practise skills in different contexts.
- ✓ Try to adapt activities to fit in with the National Curriculum.
 - ★ Use objects from the class topic (e.g. 'Under the Sea' – use 'crab' and 'whale' to perform actions, like 'crab jumping').
- ✓ Keep a record to help monitor progress.
 - ★ The scoring and reporting software available with the WellComm Toolkit can help with this.
- ✓ Enjoy the activities.
 - ★ Children learn best when they are relaxed and having fun!

Supporting language at home

Working closely and collaboratively with parents is critical to the success of WellComm. Throughout the screening process and by use of the activities contained within *The Big Book of Ideas*, WellComm actively encourages parental partnership. It is widely acknowledged that what parents do with their children in terms of activities and engagement is more important than who parents are. Yet many parents are unaware of the very simple techniques that they can use to scaffold and help develop their child's emerging language.

Section 1

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Section 1.1

Encouraging the child to respond when his/her name is called



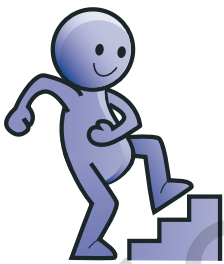
Why is this important?

It's the first stage along the way to being able to attend to increasingly more complex things as children learn the skills of social interaction. Responding to human speech is a very important step towards becoming a competent communicator. Turning to sound is a key skill because it is part of the foundations for building listening and attention skills.

What to do

- Call the child's name using exaggerated intonation.
- When the child turns to (look at) you, praise the child, smile and give some kind of a reward – a toy, a piece of food, a tickle or perhaps a kiss.

N.B. The reward is important because it shows that there is a *reason* for responding. Eventually we want the social contact to be reward enough.

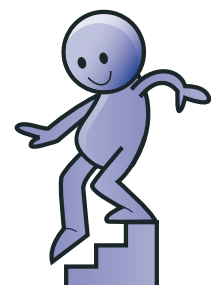


Step up

- Reduce the prompts (i.e. don't turn the child's head towards you or use toys alongside name calling). Make sure you still reward when the child responds.
- Move a little way away – more concentration is required in order to focus on you.
- Place yourself so that the child needs to actively turn to find you.

Step down

- Use a 'noisy' toy (e.g. bells following the calling of the child's name). Gradually reduce the use of the 'noisy' toy and encourage responding to name only.
- Prompt by gently turning the child towards you as you call the name.



Section 1.2

Relating two things together

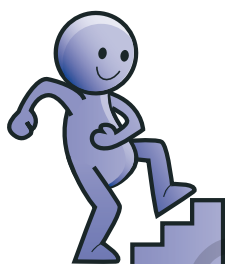


Why is this important?

Being able to relate two objects together demonstrates the beginnings of cause and effect (e.g. if children bang two bricks together, they make a noise). The noise provides the reward and they will do it again.

What to do

- Sit the child on the floor (supported if necessary).
- Put out a variety of easy-to-hold things – such as stacking pots, empty plastic bottles and tubs, bricks.
- Encourage the child to hold two things (objects) – one in each hand.
- At first, the two things might come together quite by chance – give lots of praise!
- Your reaction and the satisfying clunk are rewarding and the bringing together of the two things will become intentional.

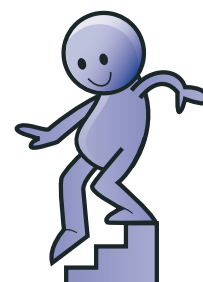


Step up

- Introduce things that sound different or have different textures (e.g. soft balls).
- Try using a drum and a spoon – the child is then learning to relate two different objects together.
- Encourage the child to choose what to pick and start banging them independently.

Step down

- Put your hands over the child's and bang the objects together.
- Bang your own set of objects and encourage the child to copy.
- Use toys that are attached using wrist bands, such as mini-cymbals – children's hair ties can be useful for this too!



Section 1.3

Understanding that words, sounds and gestures are associated with everyday actions and things

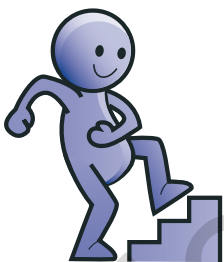


Why is this important?

The adult's role is crucial in naming the things that interest the child as he/she reaches out or points: this is how early words begin to make sense.

What to do

- Whilst looking at picture books, playing, eating or going about the daily routine, watch what captures a child's interest as he/she reaches out or points.
- Say what they see! Use single words: making noises or gestures is fun and adds to meaning.
- It makes it more fun to let the child take the lead, turning the pages of a book and playing with things he/she chooses.
- The child will begin to understand what those words mean as he/she learns to connect them with what he/she is watching.

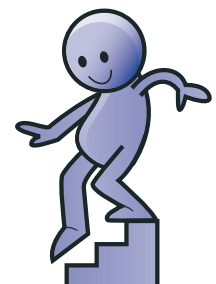


Step up

- Pause – give the child a chance to copy.
- If he/she does, repeat it again yourself and add another:
 - ★ Child: 'Car!'
 - ★ You: 'Yes, car!'
 - ★ Then add another word: 'Blue car!'

Step down

- Use just one word with interesting intonation to 'label' what the child can see (e.g. 'banana!', 'mmm!', 'nice!').
- One of the easiest words to start with is 'more' as there are many opportunities for repetition in many different contexts (e.g. food, swinging and tickling games, singing).
- Be face-to-face and at his/her level so that it's easier to see and hear you.
- Use a sign or gesture to reinforce what you say.
- Make sure you respond to what captures *his/her* interest rather than yours!
- Show how pleased you are.



Section 1.4

Following the movement of an object and an adult's gaze

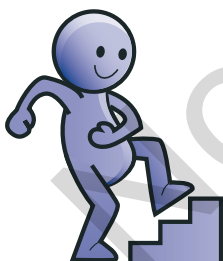


Why is this important?

It helps children begin to focus on something of the *adult's* choosing (e.g. if the adult points to a 'cat' in the garden). This is critical for the development of joint attention. Joint attention is essential if children are going to learn new words and develop their language and communication skills. In this way, children become aware of where adults are looking and they look at the same thing too. Then adults name, describe and explain. It enables children and adults to talk about things that are a distance away too.

What to do

- Start by using objects that move and are eye-catching or make a noise (e.g. a brightly coloured ball or a car that goes 'brrmm').
- Roll the ball/car slowly across the floor.
- If the child follows the movement, give lots of praise.
- If tracking the object is difficult, help by prompting the child to turn towards the object.
- When the child is following the movement, put something just out of reach. Get attention by calling his/her name – then look to the object. When the child looks, praise and reward by handing over the item.

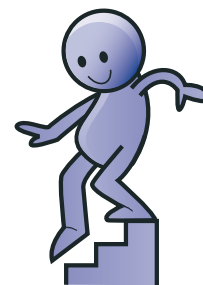


Step up

- Use less pointing.
- Encourage the child to follow your gaze to things further away or less obvious.

Step down

- *Point* to the object as you look at it.
- Pointing could begin as touching the object and then moving your finger away a few centimetres.
- Don't put the object too far away from the child.
- Move the object slightly to encourage looking, or make the toy make a noise.
- Use brightly coloured objects or those with strong contrasts (e.g. black and white).



Section 1.5

Beginning to understand language by using non-verbal clues/cues

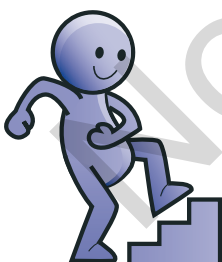


Why is this important?

Children need and use any kind of cue to help understand what is happening and what is *going* to happen. Providing these contextual clues alongside verbal language helps establish the meaning of the words.

What to do

- Use words and sentences that directly link to what is going to happen next, e.g.
 - ★ Say 'Let's go for a walk' whilst holding shoes and coat.
 - ★ Tell the child 'It's dinnertime' whilst fetching bib, dinner and spoon.
 - ★ Show the child a towel and favourite bath toy and say 'Bath-time now'.
- These actions help the child link objects and words to what is going to happen. The child may understand situations even though he/she may not understand the words on his/her own.
- Try pointing to or looking at a familiar object (e.g. cup) and ask 'Where's the cup?'
 - ★ If the child looks to the cup, give plenty of praise and hand over the cup, repeating the word 'cup'.
 - ★ If the child *doesn't* look to the cup, help by picking it up, naming it and asking again 'Where's the cup?'

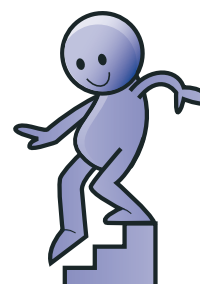


Step up

- Reduce the number of extra clues and support.

Step down

- Use the phrase at the same time as the actions.
- Have several attempts.
- Use gestures and/or signs alongside the word/s.



Section 1.6

Learning to use gesture to get an adult to make the right response



Why is this important?

Children are learning to 'ask'. They might want to be picked up for a variety of reasons (e.g. for attention, a cuddle, tiredness).

What to do

- The child may show that he/she wants to be picked up in other ways (e.g. if he/she cries, someone is likely to pick him/her up).
- Regardless of how the child 'asks' to be picked up, outstretch your arms and pause, encouraging the child to copy your actions.
- If the child copies, praise and pick him/her up.
- If the child doesn't copy, try to position his/her arms into an outstretched position prior to picking up, then praise.

N.B. Always use a word or phrase as you pick up the child (e.g. 'up' or 'pick up'). This helps link the word/phrase with the action.

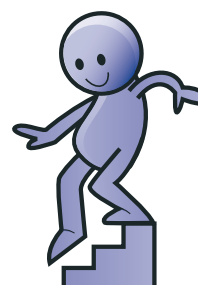


Step up

- Wait for the child to use outstretched arms, copy the child, then pick up.
- Wait for the child to verbally indicate the desire to be picked up by accepting any vocalisation attempt of 'up'.

Step down

- Use a third person to position the child's arms in an outstretched pose and then you can copy the action and do the picking up.



Section 1.7

Copying actions and gestures

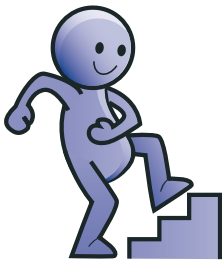


Why is this important?

The understanding and use of gesture develops in tandem with verbal communication. If children can use gestures and copy actions, they can begin to communicate their needs and wants.

What to do

- Show the child how to wave 'hello' and 'goodbye' by doing it on a regular basis yourself.
- Get down to his/her level so he/she can see what you're doing.
- Gently prompt to encourage joining in and be quick to praise when this happens.
- Use gestures as part of the daily routine (e.g. drinking, eating, nap time). Always use the words alongside the gestures to help understanding.

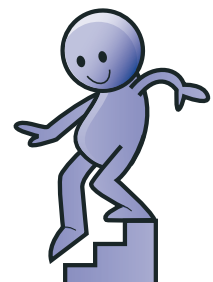


Step up

- Increase the variety of gestures.
- Encourage the child to use different gestures to indicate his/her needs (e.g. copy 'drink').
- Pair the gesture and the phrase (e.g. wave and say 'bye-bye' at the same time).

Step down

- Wave together, hand over hand.
- Wave without speaking.
- Make sure the person 'leaves' after the child waves to ensure the whole sequence of events is followed through.



Section 1.8

Learning to reach and point



Why is this important?

Reaching and pointing are an essential part of early language development. They are not only early ways to ask for things but also part of understanding cause and effect (e.g. if children reach for the mobile it makes a noise).

What to do

- Put a mobile or activity arch above the child and encourage him/her to reach for the toys.
- N.B. remember to place the toy close enough as his/her reach will be limited.
- Reward the effort with lots of praise!
 - Encourage pointing by watching what interests the child – point and name it yourself.
 - If the child reaches for something, try to mould his/her hand into a pointing shape (closed fist with index finger out) and then make sure you reward by passing across the desired item!

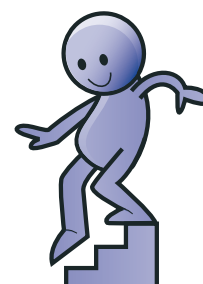


Step up

- Sit on the floor – support the child if necessary – and put out an array of sound-making toys.
- Encourage the child to reach for the toys and then reward by making the toy squeak, jingle, etc.
- Gradually increase the distance (put the toys further away) so the child is encouraged to either reach further or point.

Step down

- If the child doesn't reach out, encourage him/her by showing what the toy can do.
- Alternatively, gently guide the child to reach out (for the mobile, etc.).
- Tie a ribbon to the child's wrist or ankle so that every time he/she moves, the mobile moves.



Section 1.9

Playing (with) and listening to different sounds

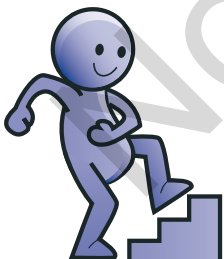


Why is this important?

Babbling is important for social interaction as it attracts the attention of those around and also stimulates children's own sound-making skills. Babbling and sound play encourage children to practise making and listening to different sounds.

What to do

- Whilst playing with a child, make the noises that the toys make. If the child copies you (or tries to copy you), give lots of praise and repeat the sounds again for him/her to hear.
- Use the following sounds during play or regular routines:
 - ★ 'Sshh' whilst the toy is sleeping.
 - ★ 'Weee' whilst going down the slide.
 - ★ 'Mmm' whilst eating.
 - ★ 'Oh no' if something falls.
 - ★ 'Brrm brrm' whilst driving a toy car.
 - ★ 'Aah' whilst cuddling the baby.
- Encourage the child to attempt animal noises when you're looking at or playing with animals (e.g. the cow goes 'moo'). Sing 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm'.
- Encourage copying through repetitive songs and rhymes. Rhymes with actions such as 'Round and Round the Garden' and 'Wheels on the Bus' are often favourites.
- Whilst playing, copy the sounds that the child makes. If the child listens or looks at you and repeats the sound, you do the same. Make the turn-taking exchange go on as long as you can!

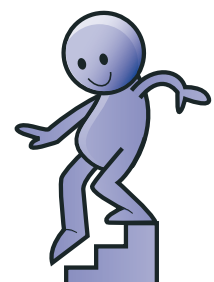


Step up

- Include sounds for objects that are similar (e.g. transport – planes, trains, cars).
- When engaging in a turn-taking game, make sounds (e.g. 'b-b-b') and then add in a new sound and see if the child can copy (e.g. 'b-b-b-s-s-s').

Step down

- Use lots and lots of repetition – children need to hear sounds and words many times before they start to copy them.
- Use actions to accompany the sounds (e.g. 'mmm' for rub your tummy; 'sshh' for put your finger up to lips and quieten your voice). Children may copy the action before the sound.



Other things to try: 1a

Learning that objects still exist even when they can't be seen

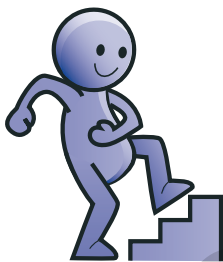


Why is this important?

Object permanence is about the developing realisation that objects continue to exist out of the immediate context. It is key to the development of language because lots of what we talk about, we cannot see at the same time.

What to do

- Roll a ball or favourite toy across a table. When it falls on the floor, show the child where it has gone.
- When a child drops things, show him/her where the object has gone.
- Hide behind a piece of furniture or the door perhaps; peep out regularly. Does the child move to find you?
- Show how pleased and surprised you are when the 'missing' thing is found!

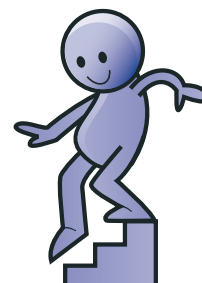


Step up

- Wait to see if the child looks for the object without your guidance.
- Comment on people leaving the room and then coming back again.

Step down

- Two adults can play the hiding game: one to hide and one to take the child to the hiding place, see the hiding and then move away and wait for the first one to peep out. Using simple language, talk the child through the hiding game.
- Partially hide a favourite toy with a cloth. Encourage the child to uncover the rest. Slowly cover more and more of the toy until completely covered, then pull the cloth off!
- Partially hide an item under a cloth (e.g. a string of beads). Here, a child learns that items can reappear in their whole form and don't cease to exist when the whole thing isn't visible.



Other things to try: 1b

Being a social play partner!

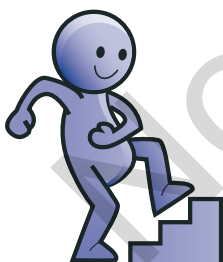


Why is this important?

Besides demonstrating how much fun this can be, social play provides valuable opportunities for imitating, learning new skills and being able to practise those skills in a safe and natural environment – all significant foundations for developing good communication.

What to do

- Sit the child on your lap facing you when you:
 - ★ Sing nursery rhymes.
 - ★ Look at picture books together.
 - ★ Play hand games/finger rhymes (e.g. 'Pat a Cake', 'This Little Piggy', 'Round and Round the Garden').
 - ★ Have cuddles and tickles.
 - ★ Talk about what you're going to do today.
 - ★ Play 'Peek-a-Boo'.
- Copy any movements/noises, etc. that the child makes. Gradually the child should begin to respond and become an active partner in play.
- Sit on the floor and play with a toy together. It doesn't matter what you choose/let the child choose. Use lots of enthusiasm and simple language related to what he/she is doing or looking at to capture his/her interest.
- Play on a swing – this is an excellent use of proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses.

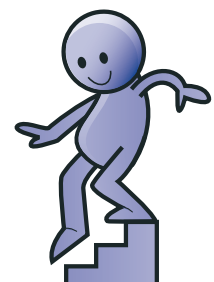


Step up

- Stop every now and again to watch what the child is doing (e.g. whilst playing peek-a-boo, pause after each turn. Does the child make a noise which you could interpret as 'again?'). This is an important use of communication.

Step down

- Do familiar activities often: some children need lots of repetition before they begin to respond.
- Actively encourage copying of your simple actions and intonation.
- Provide physical help and gestural support if necessary.
- Simple sentences and lively intonation help to keep things interesting!



Other things to try: 1c

Taking turns

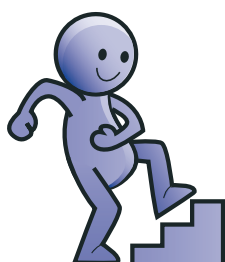


Why is this important?

Social interaction begins with learning to take turns. Communication is a two-way process – sometimes we speak, sometimes we listen. Turn-taking begins very early on: when a baby smiles, the adult smiles back.

What to do

- Take turns to make gestures, sounds or words. When the child makes a sound or a gesture, copy it straightaway.
- Give the child enough time to respond: it's important to wait.
- Don't worry if the child doesn't immediately make a noise in return; his/her response may be a look or a gesture which can also count for a 'conversation turn'.
- Turn-taking is most successful when you are watching and waiting.

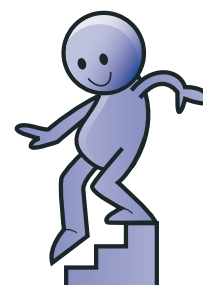


Step up

- Introduce new and different sounds or actions and see if the child tries to copy as his/her turn in the conversation.
- Start to play turn-taking games (e.g. taking turns to roll a ball, knock a tower down).

Step down

- Leave lots of time for the child to respond.
- Make familiar, simple and obvious sounds for the child to try and copy (e.g. 'baba').
- Make sure you're face-to-face so that your facial expressions are easy to see.
- Vary your intonation and volume so that the sounds you make are interesting.
- Use the daily routine to find opportunities to develop turn-taking, e.g.
 - ★ If the child bangs the table with his/her hand, bang it with your hand and wait for him/her to respond.
- ★ If the child rolls a ball to you, roll it back.
- ★ If the child makes a noise (e.g. 'dadadada'), make a noise back and see what happens next.
- Wait for the child to do something (e.g. wriggle a toe during a bouncing game before you give another bounce).



Not for distribution

Section 2

Not for distribution

Not for distribution

Section 2

Not for distribution

Sections 2.1 and 2.2

Understanding single words

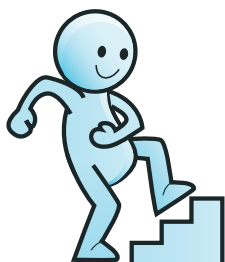


Why is this important?

Children learn that things have names by hearing the names lots of times throughout the day. Children learn these words best in their everyday environment and through play and need to hear the words many times before they begin to understand (and then use) them.

What to do

- Encourage the child to point to or find the things that you say:
 - ★ 'Find (the) *teddy*/*ball*/*car*.'
 - ★ 'Show me your *nose*/*feet*.'
 - ★ 'Where's your *shoe*?'
- Try this with pictures too when looking at a book together – encourage the child to point as you name 'Let's find the *apple*'.
- Action words (verbs) – talk about what you are both doing (e.g. running, jumping, washing, sleeping, eating).
- Gather together some toys (e.g. teddy, cup, book, spoon, brush). Ask the child to:
 - ★ 'Make teddy read the *book*.'
 - ★ '*Brush* teddy.'
 - ★ 'Give teddy a *drink*.'
- Hide objects around the room and say 'Let's find the one we ...'
 - ★ '*Drink* out of' (cup).
 - ★ '*Eat* with' (spoon).
 - ★ '*Wash* with' (flannel).
- Make a post box: put out three pictures on the table and ask the child to post the item (e.g. 'Post the *ball*').
- As a child watches, put some toys around the room (no more than five). Then, one at a time, encourage the child to find them.
- Play a shopping game with toys or food items. Ask the child to buy one item at a time from a choice of up to three.
- When playing with a picture inset puzzle, put in one piece from a choice of three (e.g. 'Find the *car*' from a choice of 'car', 'ball' and 'dog').
- When washing clothes and putting things away, ask the child to fetch one item at a time.
- Draw a simple picture (e.g. a face). Ask the child to put a sticker on a part of the face, e.g.
 - ★ 'Put it on his *nose*.'



Step up

- Ask the child for more than one thing at a time (e.g. 'Find car and dog').
- Extend the child's knowledge of words by asking for less familiar things (e.g. when shopping, ask the child to find the 'plum'; or when pointing to body parts ask for 'knee' or 'neck').
- Encourage the child to copy single words and give lots of praise for trying!

Step down

- Use a gesture/sign with the single word.
- Use lots and lots of repetition.
- When asking a child to find an item from a selection, reduce the number to two items, so the choice is between the one you name and only one other.
- Use real things to begin with – some children find these easier than pictures.
- If a child can't make the right choice, do it together.
- Guide the child's hand towards the right choice.



Section 2.3

Understanding what real things are for

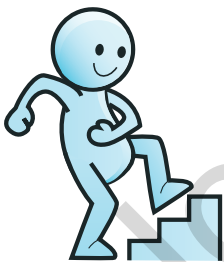


Why is this important?

Symbolic play is the ability to play meaningfully with different things (e.g. talking into a telephone). Like language, symbolic play involves the use of symbols: symbolic play is therefore crucial as it provides the context for language development. It is fun and motivating and key to learning.

What to do

- Gather together some real everyday objects (i.e. not toys but real things):
 - ★ Spoon
 - ★ Keys
 - ★ Cup
 - ★ Brush
 - ★ Telephone
- Hand one to the child and encourage him/her to demonstrate what to do with it (e.g. drink from the cup; put the keys in the door).

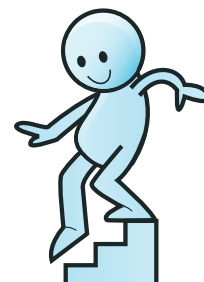


Step up

- Use toys to represent real objects (e.g. a toy telephone instead of a 'real' telephone).
- Encourage the child to use the real or toy object on a dolly or a teddy.
- Increase the range of items.

Step down

- Use the child's *own* spoon or brush, etc.
- Model what to do and encourage the child to copy.
- Guide the child's hand to drink from the cup, eat with the spoon, etc.



Section 2.4

Learning that toys represent real things/objects (symbolic understanding)



Why is this important?

Symbolic play is the ability to play meaningfully with objects (e.g. drinking from a toy cup). First, children learn to use real things (e.g. putting mummy's keys in the door) and then they learn to use toy objects (e.g. putting toy keys in the door). Like language, symbolic play involves the use of symbols: symbolic play is therefore crucial as it provides an enjoyable context for language development.

What to do

- Gather together some toys that represent real things from the child's own experience:
 - ★ Toy spoon
 - ★ Pretend keys
 - ★ Toy cup
 - ★ Pretend brush
 - ★ Toy telephone
- Choose one toy and encourage the child to show you what to do with it (e.g. drink from the cup, put the keys in the door) as one would with the real thing.

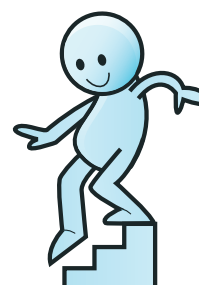


Step up

- Encourage the child to use the toys with a dolly or a teddy to act out everyday routines.
- Extend the range of toys and situations – include a doll's house, home corner, farm or garage.

Step down

- Model what to do with the toy and encourage the child to copy.
- Guide the child's hand to use the toy meaningfully.



Section 2.5

Understanding instructions using everyday routines



Why is this important?

Routines bring structure into children's lives. Familiar situations and the words, items and rituals they contain provide a framework whereby children begin to make the connections that lead to understanding of non-verbal clues (e.g. pointing).

What to do

- Think of routines that take place everyday or several times a week and involve both an adult and a child:
 - ★ Getting dressed
 - ★ Getting washed
 - ★ Shopping – at the supermarket or putting shopping away in cupboards/fridge
 - ★ Cleaning
 - ★ Bath-time
 - ★ Meal-time
- Choose at least one routine a day. For example, as you and the child are getting dressed, talk to the child about what you are doing.
 - ★ 'Putting socks on.'
 - ★ 'Brushing (Jack's) hair.'
 - ★ 'Pull pants up.'
 - ★ 'Over your head.'
- Make the activity as fun as possible:
 - ★ Pretend to put the child's sock on your foot or teddy's foot.
 - ★ When helping put on the child's t-shirt/jumper, play peek-a-boo or pretend you can't find him/her.
- Ask for help during everyday routines by asking simple questions (e.g. while getting dressed, say 'Find your socks' or 'Where's your nappy?'). Try not to point or look at the things you are asking for, as this gives an extra non-verbal clue.

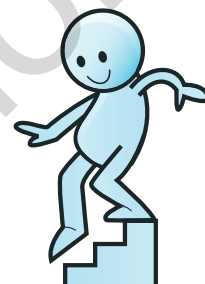


Step up

- Ask for items *out* of the usual routine (e.g. ask the child to ‘Find your socks’ just before dinner time).
- As the child becomes familiar with the vocabulary/words of routines, introduce longer sentences:
 - ★ ‘Putting jumper on (pause) keeps George warm.’
 - ★ ‘Wash Kelly’s face (pause) make it clean.’
 - ★ ‘Eat your sandwich (pause) cheese today.’

Step down

- Use single words and simply name the item of clothing/object as it is being used, e.g.
 - ★ Pick up brush and say ‘brush’. When brushing hair say ‘hair’. When finished say ‘finished’ or ‘all done’.
- Children love to join in. Give the child a duster and talk about what you are cleaning together.
- If the child finds it difficult when you ask for items during a specific routine, for example, during bath-time, give a clue (e.g. as you say ‘find the flannel’, point or look at it).
- Ensure you stick to the same order and use the same words. In this way, actions support the vocabulary. This is called a joint action routine.



Section 2.6

Learning to take the initiative/lead

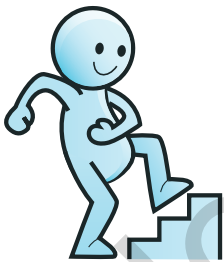


Why is this important?

Being able to initiate an interaction demonstrates an awareness of the need to ask others for help in order have needs met. Children learn how to use their language and communication skills for specific purposes.

What to do

- Put out a selection of toys that will challenge (e.g. shape sorter, puzzle, book).
- Watch as the child chooses something. Show interest in sharing the activity by stretching your arms out towards the toy/child and saying 'Let's do the puzzle together'.
- As the child becomes familiar with the routine of an adult offering 'help', wait for him/her to bring the toy/book to you to show/request. It is important to join in straightaway so that the link is made between the request and the reward (i.e. doing the puzzle together).
- The best way is to encourage the use of 'more' as a request for a favoured activity to continue or be repeated (e.g. singing, bouncing, swinging).

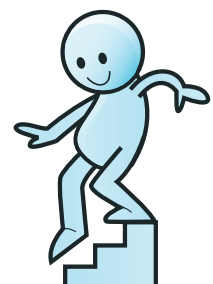


Step up

- When the child is having trouble with, for example, posting a shape, know how long you can wait to see if the child asks for help.
- When reading a book together or singing a nursery rhyme, wait for the child to ask to do it again. Accept any sound or gesture as a request for repetition.
- As you move to get ready to go out or prepare a snack, encourage the child to get you to open the door, cupboard or drawer so that the activity can get under way.

Step down

- Try doing this activity with food: give the child a drink with the lid on or a banana that's not peeled so that he/she has to initiate the request to open it.
- Prompt the child to want to include you by stretching out your hands as you offer to join in.
- Use hand-on-hand help with a puzzle piece, a shape sorter or turning the pages of a book.
- Prompt a repetition of a song by beginning to hum the tune.



Section 2.7

Pointing to things or people that are interesting



Why is this important?

Pointing is very powerful as children learn to 'ask' for what they want! Although non-verbal, pointing can serve a variety of communication functions – to initiate conversation, to make a request for something, or to draw another's attention to something that captures interest. As children point and adults name or comment on the object/event of interest, vocabulary and understanding can dramatically increase. Learning to point often signals a major step forward in asking for things and commenting on items in the environment.

What to do

- When out and about or playing at home, comment on what the child is looking at: *you* take the lead sometimes by encouraging him/her to look and point to things you name.
- Point things out in books: as you turn the page, pause to see if the child points to something, then name it immediately so that the child's understanding of words can be increased.
- Put something of high interest out of reach so the child has to point to get it. When you respond to the pointing, name the thing as you hand it over.
- Praise the child for 'asking' for the drink or 'showing' you the dog.

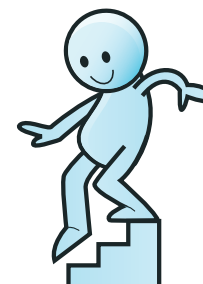


Step up

- As the child points to what captures his/her interest, pause to give an opportunity for a spontaneous attempt to name it as well.

Step down

- Be at the same height so you can adopt the child's eye view as you look and point.
- If the child finds it difficult to point, then take his/her hand and physically prompt to point to something interesting as you name it.
- Demonstrate by pointing to things yourself when out for a walk.
- Get the child's attention by calling his/her name and then pointing to something.
- Point to objects that are close to the child rather than an aeroplane far away in the sky.
- Stimulate interest by putting high interest items (bright and colourful or noisy) just out of reach.



Section 2.8

Using those important 'first words'

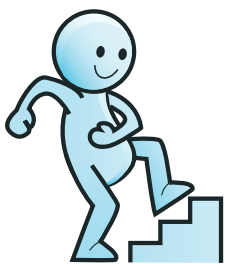


Why is this important?

Children first use single words to name or request items in their environment. By increasing vocabulary through games and activities, children will be able to use the words learnt for a variety of different things – ask, comment, draw attention to, indicate something has gone, etc. The function that these words have is very important. For example, the word 'car' can be used in a number of different ways to signal different meanings according to the context and the intonation used.

What to do

- Put everyday items in a bag or a pillowcase and encourage the child to pull out one item at a time and name it.
- Hide photos/pictures/toys around the room: encourage the child to find and name them.
- Find or make a cube-shaped box. Stick photos or pictures from a catalogue on each of the sides. Let the child throw the cube and name the picture that lands face-up.
- Share books, naming pictures together.
- Play with an inset puzzle: keeping the remaining pieces to one side, offer a choice of two and ask which to put in next. Encourage the child to name (e.g. 'ball') before passing over the piece.
- As you put the shopping away together, encourage the child to name the items as they are taken out of the bag and put away.
- *Any* and *all* everyday routines (shopping, laundry, meals, bath-time, dressing) provide opportunities to name things over and over again, providing the best possible opportunity for the child to join in and ultimately to name things spontaneously.
- Give the child a phrase to complete. Playing 'Ready, Steady, Go' can help a child to say 'go'. Make sure the game is fun and he/she wants to play with the toy. Say 'Ready, steady ...' but then wait to give the child time to say 'go'. If he/she doesn't after a long pause, say 'go' for the child and release the toy. Try again on the next turn.

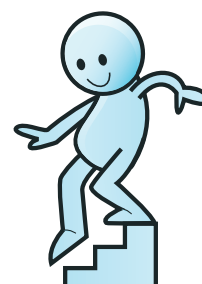


Step up

- Place toys/food slightly out-of-reach so the child has to ‘ask’ for them. This may be done by pointing initially. Give a choice to encourage a verbal request (e.g. ‘Do you want the teddy or drink?’).
- As the child names something, you *add* another word. This could be a description perhaps, or a comment, e.g.
 - ★ Child: ‘Cup’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘Yes, cup/Dolly’s cup/Blue cup’.
 - ★ Child: ‘Apple’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘More apple/Apple gone’.

Step down

- Keep activities short.
- Maximise the opportunities offered by daily routines.
- Use the names of familiar items at every opportunity (e.g. body parts at bath-time, clothes as you dress, shopping as you move around the supermarket). Use them over and over again, encouraging the child to copy again and again.
- Offer choices: ‘Is it a cat or a dog?’
- Play ‘Ready, Steady, Go!’ and use a high-interest ball or vehicle to release on the word ‘go’. Hand-on-hand prompts can also help to time the release with the word as accurately as possible.
- Name the same five objects (out of the bag) every day.
- Start the game off by saying ‘It’s a ...’



Section 2.9

Learning to ask for things by gesturing

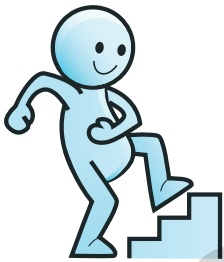


Why is this important?

Gestures provide children with the non-verbal means to ask for something. Gestures provide a visual cue about what is going to happen next and, when used in tandem with words, give additional information to help understand verbal language/speech/what is said.

What to do

- Use gestures for everyday objects/actions (e.g. drink, eat, wash (face/hands), brush (hair/teeth), banana). These can be signs or natural gestures, as might be used in a game of charades.
- When the child 'asks' for a drink by reaching, pointing or looking towards the cup, use the gesture for 'drink'. Then mould the child's hand into the 'drink' gesture, saying the word as the gesture is performed and then give the child the drink immediately.
- Repeat this every time the child wants a drink, etc.
N.B. Gestures/signs always need to be accompanied by the spoken word.

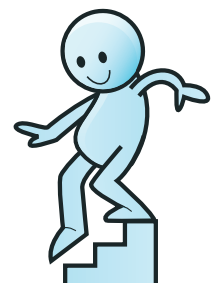


Step up

- Introduce more gestures so that gestures can be combined (e.g. 'drink gone' and 'more drink').

Step down

- Work on encouraging the child to use only one gesture to begin with. Once they've got the hang of this, introduce another.
- You will continue to gesture all the time, however, as you support the child's understanding of the words you are using.
- When the child 'asks' for a drink, offer a choice: 'Do you want *drink* or *wash*?' Gesture the key words.
- Limit the number of words/gestures you introduce but use them frequently, engineering opportunities for repetition.



Section 2.10

Learning to use 'my own name'

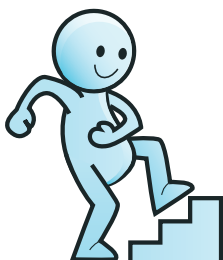


Why is this important?

Children refer to themselves by name before they learn to use the pronoun 'I'. Pronouns can be tricky to learn because they change depending on who is doing the talking. Using a child's own name is the first stage of this process.

What to do

- Play turn-taking games such as rolling a ball to each other or building a tower together.
- Signify whose turn it is by naming (e.g. 'Mummy's turn', 'Flynn's turn') rather than using 'my'/'your'.
- Occasionally pause and see if the child fills in whose turn it is.

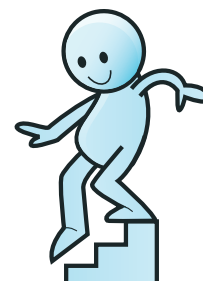


Step up

- Use opportunities to associate names with the pronoun, e.g.
 - ★ 'Mummy's opening the door: *I'm* opening the door.'
 - ★ 'Sasha's having milk: *you're* having milk.'
- Hand out items (e.g. 'One for you, one for me').

Step down

- As you talk during everyday activities, refer to yourselves using names rather than pronouns (e.g. 'Daddy's coat', 'Samil jump', 'Mrs Brown help').



Other things to try: 2a

Developing understanding of single words

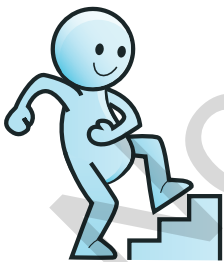


Why is this important?

Sharing books with a child has many benefits including developing shared attention, developing vocabulary and understanding of single words, relating objects to the pictures and learning about the world. Books can also help prepare a child for school.

What to do

- Gather together a few books. These can be story books or picture books.
- You don't have to read the story in a book.
- Look at the pictures with the child.
- Point to and talk about what is happening in the pictures.
- Use language appropriate to the child's needs (e.g. if the child only understands a few words, use single words).
- Use lots of repetition and pause after each word to give the child a chance to respond.
- If the child attempts to copy the words, give lots of praise.
- Talk about objects (e.g. bike, tree) as well as actions (e.g. jumping, sitting).

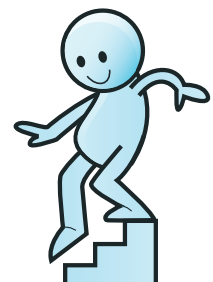


Step up

- As the child begins to understand more words, ask him/her to find an object in the picture. Take it in turns.

Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the names of things.
- Always make sure the child is looking at what you are talking about (e.g. if a child is looking at the ducks on a pond and you say 'boy swing', he/she will find it more difficult to link the words and pictures together).
- If the child finds it difficult, guide his/her hand to the right place in the picture.



Other things to try: 2b

Encouraging children to take turns during play



Why is this important?

Communication is a two-way process where each person takes a turn. These early turn-taking games will help children practise their turn-taking skills.

What to do

- Sit opposite the child and take turns doing the following:
 - ★ Rolling a ball or pushing a car to each other.
 - ★ Rolling a ball at skittles and knocking them down.
 - ★ Posting shapes into a shape sorter.
 - ★ Pressing buttons/knobs on press up toys.
 - ★ Placing rings on a stacker.
 - ★ Turning pages in a book and lifting flaps.
 - ★ Placing a brick or stacking cup on a tower.
 - ★ Blowing bubbles.
 - ★ Feeding a doll or teddy.
 - ★ Making splashes in the bath.
 - ★ With musical instruments (e.g. banging a drum, blowing a whistle).
- The list is endless, just use your imagination!

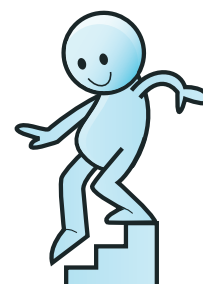


Step up

- Pause for a little longer each time before taking your turn. This will encourage the child to wait a little longer.
- Introduce 'Ready, Steady, Go' if the child can wait long enough.

Step down

- Give a verbal prompt showing whose turn it is next (e.g. 'Mummy's turn' or 'Sunil's turn').
- Give a physical prompt (e.g. by gently holding the child's hand to help him/her wait).
- Give a visual prompt (e.g. by pointing to the next person or looking at them).



Other things to try: 2c

Developing eye contact



Why is this important?

Eye contact is important for the development of social interaction. It is important to look at people when they are talking as this shows that you are listening. As a speaker, it is important to use good eye contact as it enables you to monitor what the listener is feeling. Using the right amount of eye contact is a learned skill.

What to do

- Use one of the following materials:
 - ★ Finger puppets
 - ★ Bubbles
 - ★ Party blowers
 - ★ Silly hats/glasses/face masks
 - ★ Pop-up cone dolly
 - ★ Squeaky toy
 - ★ Making funny faces/noises
- Encourage the child to look at you by holding one of the above materials near to your face. Call the child's name and when he/she looks at you, give a reward (e.g. bubbles, party blower, pop-up dolly).
- Praise verbally by saying 'Good looking!'

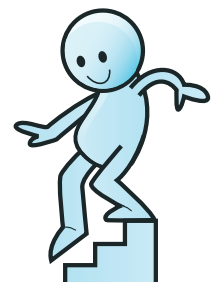


Step up

- Encourage longer periods of eye contact before rewarding.
- Encourage looking at you and looking at the toy/game in turn.

Step down

- Make sure the reward is instant following eye contact.
- To begin with, praise fleeting eye contact and reward.
- Use the reward to gain eye contact (e.g. holding the bubbles in the child's gaze and then moving the bottle up to your face. A child may follow the bottle to your face with his/her eyes and then you can use the bubbles as a reward immediately).
- Always play face-to-face with the child, on his/her level (i.e. if they're sitting on the floor, do the same).
- Gently lift the child's chin to bring his/her face in line with yours.



Other things to try: 2d

Matching two objects together

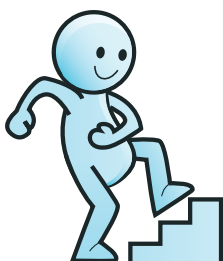


Why is this important?

Matching objects encourages children to further develop symbolic understanding to sort objects according to their appearance. By matching items, children begin to realise that objects which have the same function can look slightly different and are still essentially the same (e.g. two different coloured pencils, a big cup vs. a small cup).

What to do

- Get two sets of matching objects (e.g. two spoons, two pencils, two balls).
- Place two objects on the floor (e.g. spoon and ball).
- Give the child a corresponding object (e.g. ball) and encourage him/her to put it with the matching object.

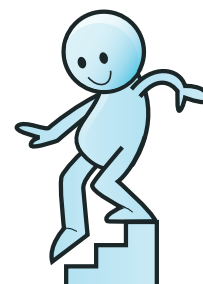


Step up

- Introduce objects that are slightly different (e.g. one pink and one blue pencil, two different-sized spoons).
- Introduce objects from similar groups (e.g. two cups and two plates).
- Encourage the child to help sort the washing and find the matching socks.
- In a farmyard game, put all the animals in the right fields (e.g. the sheep together and the cows together).
- Put toy cutlery in the home corner cutlery tray.
- Put the child's cups and plates away after meal or snack time.

Step down

- Place items in hoops or boxes with an identical one you have already put there.
- Make sure the objects are exactly the same and that there are lots of them so there are lots of opportunities for repetition.
- Guide the child's hand to place the object in the correct place.



Other things to try: 2e

Matching something to the picture it represents

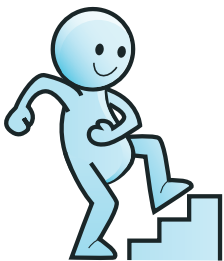


Why is this important?

Matching objects to photos or pictures helps children understand that objects exist in other forms and this helps develop symbolic skills further.

What to do

- Collect a set of objects/toys and a corresponding set of pictures (e.g. a toy car and a picture of a toy car).
- Put out two pictures (e.g. car and spoon).
- Give the child an object (e.g. spoon) and encourage him/her to put it with the corresponding picture.

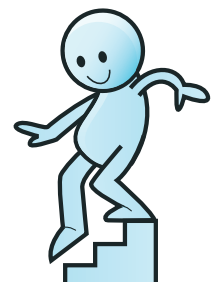


Step up

- Increase the number of pictures to choose from.
- Introduce pictures that are slightly different from the object (e.g. a toy duck with a picture of a real duck).
- Use objects/pictures with similar functions (e.g. two different animals, a spoon and a fork, a car and a bus).
- Use two identical pictures and match these together.
- Play simple lotto games where, for example, a child has four pictures. Put the corresponding objects into a bag. Take it in turns to delve into the bag, find an item and match it to the picture. When the child can do this with objects, try with two matching sets of pictures.

Step down

- Use the child's own objects and photographs of him/herself.
- Take photos of actual objects you have and use these before moving on to pictures.
- Guide the child's hand to place the object with the correct picture.



Other things to try: 2f

Using early words – ‘go’!

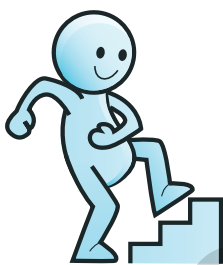


Why is this important?

Teaching early words such as ‘go’, ‘more’ and ‘gone’ have a clear purpose and children quickly learn that using these words makes something happen (e.g. a ball is rolled when ‘go’ is said, or children get ‘more’ food/toy/favourite activity when ‘more’ is used). These words have a function for children and are important for the later development of two-word phrases.

What to do

- Play with a toy car or other favourite vehicle.
- Start by rolling it backwards and forwards to each other (developing turn-taking skills).
- Slowly introduce ‘Ready, Steady, Go’ on your turn, waiting until ‘go’ has been said before rolling the car.
- Pause after ‘Ready, Steady ...’ to see if the child vocalises ‘Go’.

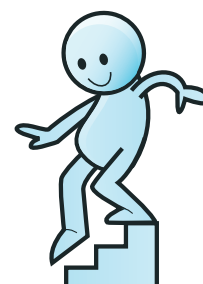


Step up

- Increase the amount of time between the ‘Ready’ and the ‘Steady’ so the child has to wait longer.
- Introduce ‘Ready, Steady, Go’ on the child’s turn.
- Extend this idea into everyday routines and play (e.g. roll or kick a ball, use a wind-up toy, run races, blow bubbles).

Step down

- Children may need lots and lots of repetitions before they are able to respond.
- Use a second adult to hold the child’s hand, gently stopping the car from being pushed until ‘Go’ has been said.
- Say ‘Ready, Steady, Go’ fairly quickly so the child has less time to wait.



Not for distribution

Section 3

Not for distribution

Section 3

Not for distribution

Section 3.1

Learning to make sense of the world through play

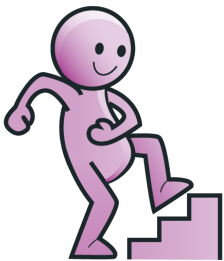


Why is this important?

Pretend play helps children understand how objects are used in the real world and also leads to an awareness that toys can represent real things and people. As play skills develop, so does the knowledge of the words that represent objects as they are heard in context during play. Play is essential for children's learning and for the development of language.

What to do

- Get together a large doll or teddy (*not* miniature) and some real everyday objects (e.g. cup, brush, flannel).
- Offer the child one of the objects (e.g. cup).
- Encourage the child to use the cup to 'Give dolly a drink'.

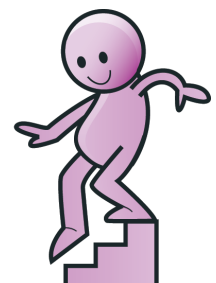


Step up

- Once the child is using real objects with the doll, introduce doll-sized objects that represent 'real' objects (e.g. toy cup, doll's bottle).
- Expand the variety of 'real' situations that can be acted out in play.
- Use a small sequence of pretend play actions (e.g. washing doll, drying doll and putting doll to bed).

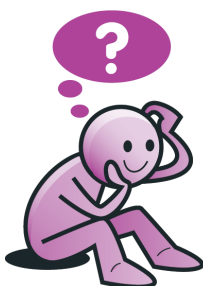
Step down

- Play with the child and include the doll in your play. Show how you can be given a drink and then give doll a drink.
- Use gesture and signs and lots of repetition.
- Using single words, name things that capture the child's interest, to help develop the child's understanding of the words in context.
- Guide the child's hand (e.g. brush doll's hair together).
- Begin with very few toys and gradually introduce more; model examples of the pretend play.
- Give the child time and space to experiment and discover what to do for himself/herself.



Section 3.2

Using songs and rhymes to learn single words/the names of body parts

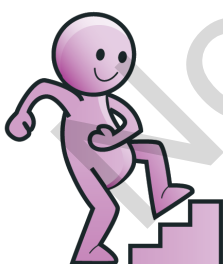


Why is this important?

The names of body parts are part of a child's early vocabulary. At first children learn to understand the word on its own and then phrases using the word (e.g. 'Mummy's hand', 'Tommy's eyes').

What to do

- Sing lots of action songs together relating to body parts. Examples include:
 - ★ 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.'
 - ★ 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush' (e.g. this is the way we 'wash our teeth', 'brush our hair').
 - ★ 'If You're Happy and You Know It ...'
 - ★ 'Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear.'
- As you sing, point to each body part together.
- Encourage the child to join in with the actions and point to body parts as you sing.
- Make up songs using well-known tunes (e.g. 'The Wheels on the Bus' could be adapted to 'Katie on the bus, she claps her hands' or 'The children on the bus they touch their toes').
- During everyday routines (e.g. getting dressed, bath-time) ask the child to 'Point to nose', 'Wash tummy', 'Put sock on foot').

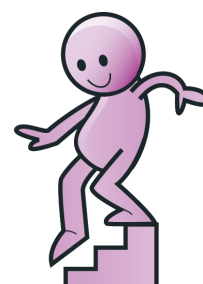


Step up

- Choose a teddy/doll and point to the body parts as you sing the song together.
- Ask the child 'What did you touch?' after each part of the song.
- Pause between the words in the song to encourage the child to fill the gap (e.g. 'Head, shoulders, knees and ...').

Step down

- Let the child listen and watch as *you* do the actions that go with the song.
- Physically prompt the actions (e.g. hold the child's hands and clap along together).



Section 3.3

Learning what 'doing' words (verbs) mean

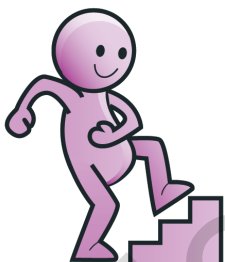


Why is this important?

Action words describe what people are doing. They are more difficult to learn than object names because they aren't static. Children pick them up more easily if they can be experienced (e.g. by 'washing' themselves or teddy). It's important, therefore, to use as many multi-sensory activities as you can.

What to do

- You will need:
 - ★ Teddy or doll (or a favourite toy).
 - ★ Cup, brush, item of food, flannel.
- Put out teddy (or other toy) with two different objects (e.g. cup and flannel). Ask:
 - ★ 'Make teddy *drink*.'
 - ★ '*Wash* teddy.'
- You can also ask the child to make teddy perform an action that doesn't need any props (e.g. sleep, run, sit, wave, clap).
 - ★ 'Make teddy *jump*.'
 - ★ 'Make teddy *sit*.'
 - ★ 'Make teddy *sleep*.'



Step up

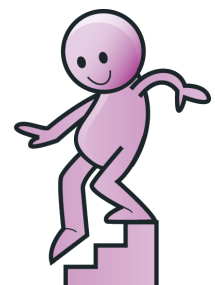
- Add a second toy – the child will then need to choose between the person (doll/teddy) and the action (drink/wash).
- Increase the number of items/actions/vary the instructions.
- Encourage the child to tell *you* what teddy is doing.
- Include less common action words (e.g. digging, throwing, hopping).
- Provide direct experience (e.g. 'push' on the swing, 'bounce' on the trampoline, 'jump', 'hop').

Step down

- Use gestures/signs to help the child understand the instruction.
- Demonstrate the action and then repeat the instruction for the child to follow, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: 'Make teddy *jump*.'
 - ★ Child: Doesn't respond or performs wrong action.
 - ★ Adult: 'Look, teddy jump'

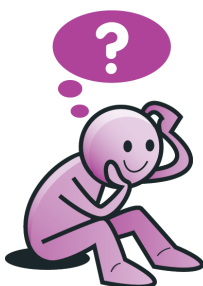
(demonstrates to child, then replaces teddy).

- ★ Adult: 'Can you make teddy jump?'
- ★ Child: Responds correctly or adult demonstrates again.
- During play activities or when looking at books, talk about what toys or people are doing using one–two-word sentences.



Section 3.4

Understanding sentences with two key words



Why is this important?

This is part of the continuum of language development: children learn to abstract meaning from one (key) word and then move to being able to do the same with two. This is explained more fully in the *WellComm Handbook* where word levels are discussed (pages 37–41).

What to do

- Gather together:
 - ★ Teddy and doll (or two of the child's toys).
 - ★ Two of the following objects: bed/chair/table/box/plate/cup.
- Put out the two toys and three objects.
- Ask the child to put one of the toys 'in'/'on' one of the objects, e.g.
 - ★ 'Put *doll* on the *table*.'
 - ★ 'Put *teddy* in the *box*.'
- Vary the instructions and use different toys and objects.

N.B. The child doesn't need to understand the prepositions in/on to do this task.

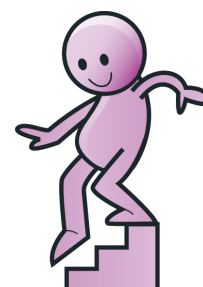


Step up

- Add another toy (e.g. a monkey or another object, like a bed).
- Reduce signs and gestures so the child is relying solely on the words.
- Encourage the child to tell *you* what to do.
- Draw some pictures on shoe boxes (e.g. animal faces, clown, dinosaur). Ask the child to put an object/toy in one of the boxes, e.g.
 - ★ 'Put the *keys* in the *cat*.'
 - ★ 'Put the *plate* in the *dinosaur*.'

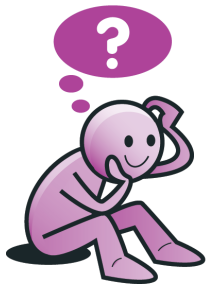
Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the key word/s.
- Demonstrate the activity first.
- If the child chooses the wrong toy or wrong place, praise the child for trying, then:
 - ★ Repeat the question and see if the child is successful this time.
 - ★ Demonstrate what you asked.
 - ★ Replace the toys and then repeat the question so the child can copy what is required.
 - ★ If the child is struggling, reduce the number of toys to one *or* the number of objects to one.



Section 3.5

Understanding the words only (no cues and out of routine!)

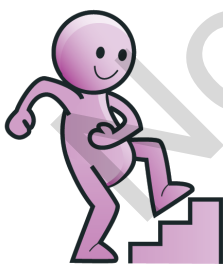


Why is this important?

When children first begin to understand simple instructions, they use all the cues around them (e.g. routine, pointing, gestures) to work out what they need to do – the words are not necessarily the most important part! As the connection between the words and the cues is established, the meaning of the words alone begins to develop. Only when the child is able to follow instructions without the cues can we say that verbal understanding is developing.

What to do

- It is important for the child to realise that not everything happens at the same time every day (e.g. other children may have a swimming or music lesson one afternoon but not *every* afternoon; you may have forgotten to get something from the shops and have to go out at an unusual time). In these situations the child can't rely on routine to work out what will happen.
- Try to reduce the number of additional cues (pointing, gestures) you give; so, as an example, instead of putting *your* coat and shoes on first, you might say 'Go and get your coat' or 'Can you fetch Mummy's bag?' If the child is successful, the words ('coat' or 'bag') alone have really been understood.

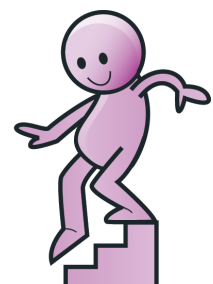


Step up

- Use longer instructions (e.g. 'Go and get your shoes and coat').
- Build on the variety of instructions, making them slightly unusual and out of the everyday routine.

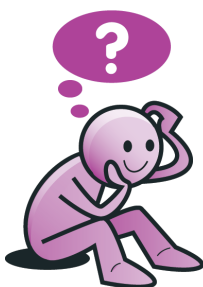
Step down

- Reduce the 'load' by introducing one cue at a time (e.g. give the instruction 'Get your coat' as you are near the coats and are pointing to them. You can gradually increase the complexity by giving the instruction further away from the coats, etc.).



Section 3.6

Putting two early words together



Why is this important?

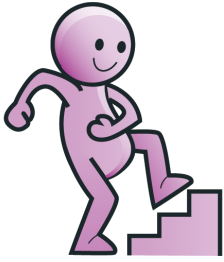
As children are beginning to string words together, words such as 'more', 'gone' and 'bye-bye' can be added to the object names that the child has acquired. They are a fun and easy way to develop two-word phrases. These are often referred to as pivot phrases.

What to do – 'more'

- Choose high-interest items for this activity!
- Break a biscuit, apple, banana, piece of toast into small bite-size pieces and pass the child a small piece to eat.
- When he/she reaches or vocalises for 'more', say 'more biscuit' and pass over another piece.
- As this becomes consistent, encourage the child to *ask* for 'more'. Pause as he/she is reaching to give a chance for the word to be used.
- Remember – it doesn't matter if the word isn't perfect!
- When the child is using 'more', encourage joining the 'more' with the item (e.g. 'more apple').
- Blow bubbles: encourage the child to say 'more bubbles' before you respond.

What to do – 'gone'

- Gather together a box or bag and some everyday objects/toys.
- Encourage the child to post the objects into the box/bag.
- As each one is posted, *you* say 'gone'.
- Now pause after each object has been posted, waiting to see if the child will copy.
- When the child is consistently using 'gone', begin to join 'object + gone' as the child posts the objects or puts them away in the bag (e.g. 'keys gone', 'brush gone').

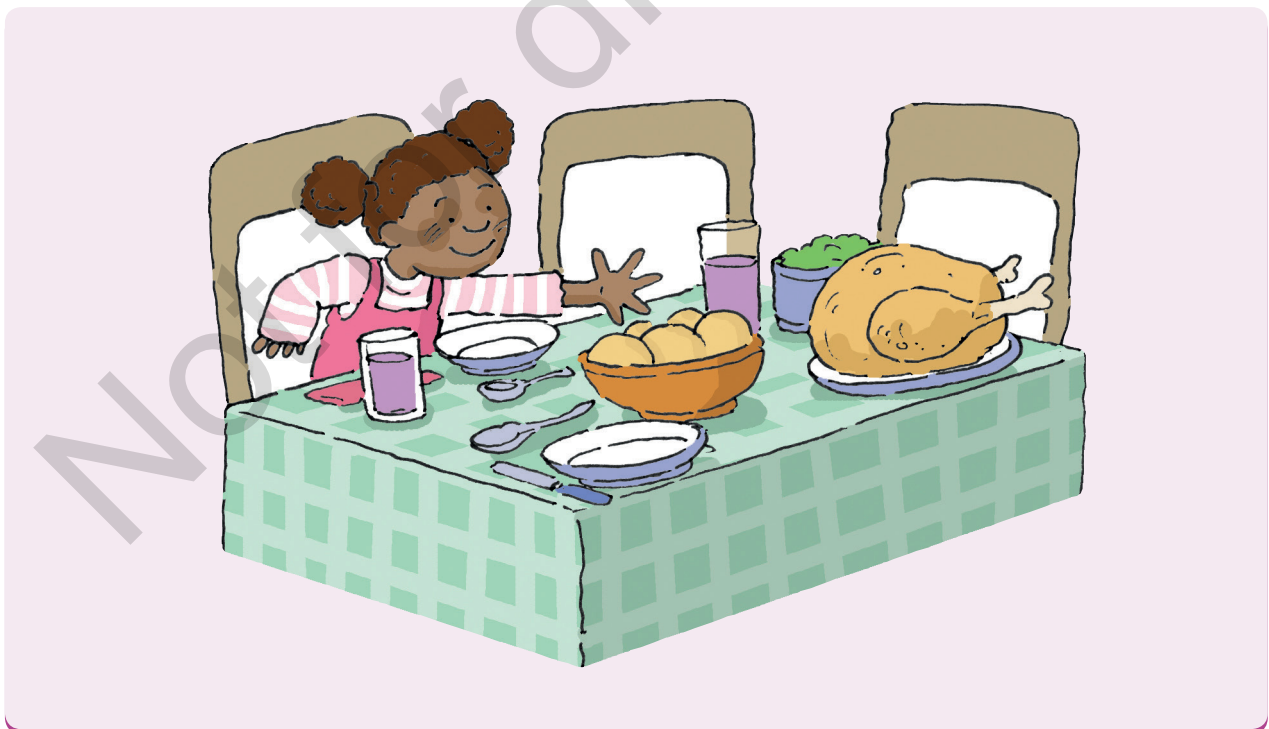


Step up

- As the child consistently uses the word 'more + object' or 'object + gone', try 'more apple' as you supply another piece and 'apple gone' as it is eaten. One apple can provide multiple learning opportunities!
- Use these simple combinations in a variety of situations (e.g. as people are leaving, toys or shopping are put away, dinner is finished, bricks posted into a shape sorter, or more tins of beans are put into the shopping trolley!).

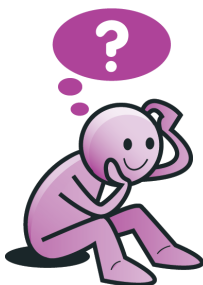
Step down

- Only work on one of these words at a time.
- To begin with, accept any vocalisation that represents 'more' or 'gone'.
- Use a gesture/sign alongside the word.
- Try a 'feely' bag with hidden toys: you want the trigger of 'more' before pulling out the surprise.
- Be prepared to do this a number of times, using the word 'more' as you pull the items from the bag.
- Try saying the first sound 'mmm' as a prompt for the word.
- Help the child to make a gesture to signal 'more'.



Section 3.7

Using one word to describe an action

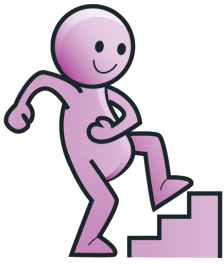


Why is this important?

Action words (verbs) describe what is happening/what someone or thing is doing. They are more abstract than object names (i.e. they can't be seen) and therefore can be trickier to learn. Describing what someone else is doing is a further step along this road.

What to do

- During movement or physical play, talk about what the child is doing. Ask the child if he/she can copy, e.g.
 - ★ 'Mummy's *jumping*. Can Amy *jump*?'
 - ★ 'That boy's *climbing*. Can Jalil *climb*?'
- As the child begins to understand the action words, ask: 'What is Amy doing?'
- Sing nursery rhymes that include actions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush' (e.g. 'this is the way we clap our hands, stamp our feet, jump up and down').
 - ★ 'The Wheels on the Bus' (e.g. 'the people/children on the bus, they wave bye-bye, nod their head, eat their lunch').
 - ★ 'If You're Happy and You Know It ...'
- Encourage the child to join in with the actions: sometimes pause and ask, e.g.
 - ★ 'What did we do with our hands?' – 'clap'.
- Play 'Simon Says'. Ask the child to follow instructions to:
 - ★ Jump, walk, run, sleep, clap, fall down, etc.
- At first, do the actions together and then let the child try by him/herself. Get doll or teddy to play along too. Reverse the roles so the child has to tell others what to do – you could use picture cards for this so one child, in turn, tells the others to do the action on the card.
- Look at picture books together, talking about what people are doing. Ask, e.g.
 - ★ 'Find someone who's *running*.'
- Take it in turns to find someone and say what is happening. If the child is unsure of the right word, offer a choice 'Is he *running* or *sleeping*?'
- During play, *you* describe what is happening and/or ask the child what he/she's doing, e.g.
 - ★ In the home corner – brushing teeth/hair, eating, sleeping, sitting, cooking, tidying, cleaning.
 - ★ During ball play – the child can roll, bounce, throw and catch.
 - ★ Playing with cars – the child can push, crash, pull and stop.
 - ★ Craft play – cutting, painting, cooking, drawing, colouring, etc.

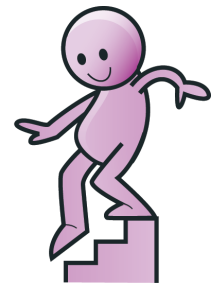


Step up

- Try bridging by using two words together to describe an action: when the child uses an action word, try adding *another* word either before or after the action word – this will add to the vocabulary store but also provide an excellent opportunity for expanding language (e.g. child says ‘eat’, adult says ‘yes eating apple’ or ‘girl eating’).
- Gather pictures of a boy and girl doing similar things (e.g. running). Can the child use two words to describe these pictures (e.g. ‘girl running’, ‘boy running’)?
- Introduce more difficult or less familiar action words (e.g. flying, writing, mopping).
- Look for action words in a picture of many items or much activity.

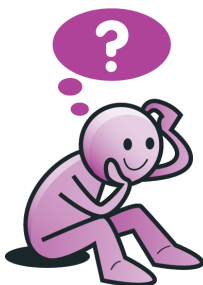
Step down

- Support understanding by using gestures/signs alongside the word.
- Demonstrate action words and encourage the child to copy (e.g. if you are looking at a picture book and see a picture of a boy climbing, encourage the child to copy the action by climbing the stairs or up a slide. Practise with doll and teddy too. This helps the child experience the actions).
- If using the right word is difficult, try giving a choice (e.g. picture of child digging in the sand, ask ‘Is the boy cutting or digging?’).
- Model the right answer (e.g. picture of digging in the sand):
 - ★ Adult: ‘What’s this boy doing?’
 - ★ Child: ‘Sand’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘Yes he’s *digging* (in the) sand! *What’s* he doing?’
 - ★ Child: ‘Digging sand’.



Section 3.8

Naming more everyday things

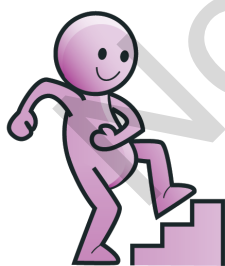


Why is this important?

Children need to hear words many times before they begin to use them. Everyday objects/photos/favourite toys are the words that children will be most familiar with and therefore the ones they will be motivated to use first. Expanding vocabulary is an important aspect of language learning.

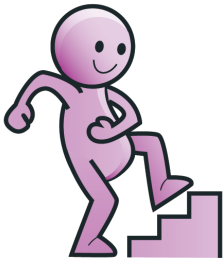
What to do

- Use a bag (e.g. felt bag/PE bag/pillowcase) and put a selection of everyday objects (about ten items) inside:
 - ★ Brush, cup, shoe, book, teddy, etc.
- Let the child feel inside the bag and pull something out.
- As this happens, pause to see if he/she spontaneously names the item.
- If this doesn't happen, offer a choice (e.g. 'Is it a *brush* or a *car*?').
- If this doesn't prompt the name, *you* name the item. Use lots of repetition to give the child the opportunity to listen to the word.
- Demonstrate what the item is for as you say the word (e.g. pretend to drink as you say 'cup').
- When the bag is empty, reverse the activity so the child is picking up an object, naming it as it goes back into the bag.



Step up

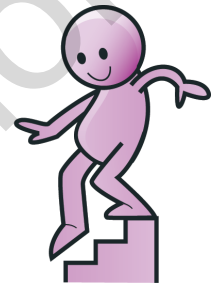
- Ask the child to take *two* things out of the bag. Can he/she name both (e.g. ball *and* car)?
- Increase the number and variety of things in the bag.
- Include less familiar items.
- Look at books with the child and talk about what's going on in the pictures. Try to use one or two words at a time. Take it in turns to point to a picture and say what it is.



- As the child gets into the 'naming game', try adding another word: this could be a describing word like 'car' (e.g. 'blue car', 'big car') or an action word (e.g. 'drive car') or perhaps one of those useful 'more' and 'gone' words learnt earlier!
- Put the pieces from a form board/lift-out puzzle into the bag. As the child pulls out a piece, encourage him/her to name it. As the piece goes into the puzzle, name it again and add a word (e.g. for a car, *you* say 'blue car' or 'big car').

Step down

- Use familiar objects and things of high interest.
- Use photos of familiar people.
- Keep your language simple; use one or two words only so that it's easier to focus on the names of things.
- Use gestures/signs alongside the word.
- Don't worry if it takes time for the child to begin to copy; remember children need to hear things many times before they begin to use them.
- There is less pressure if you take it in turns to take something out of the bag.
- Use a small number of items and repeat several times during the day.
- Start the child off by saying 'It's a ...'



Section 3.10

'Talking about what I have seen or done'

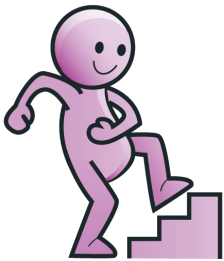


Why is this important?

Children need to learn how to use words to draw attention to something – to 'comment' (e.g. child sees a duck and says 'duck'). This is an important communicative function as language is not just about getting one's own basic needs met, but is about chatting to others too!

What to do

- When out and about, or round the house, give the child opportunities to point to things in the environment (e.g. when at the park, point to the 'dog'). Follow what captures the child's interest.
- Point to and name things yourself.

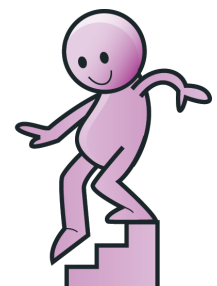


Step up

- If the child points to and says 'dog', you add another word (e.g. 'dog walking' or 'little dog').
- When you come back from an outing, encourage the child to tell someone else what he/she has seen, or recap yourself a little later on. This not only shows that other people in the child's world are interested in what happens, but also helps develop the skill of relating something to an experience that has *already* happened/not in the here and now. If this seems hard, make a bridge by offering a choice as a prompt (e.g. 'Did we see an *elephant* or a *dog*?').

Step down

- Use signs/gestures alongside the words.
- Don't worry if the child doesn't use the words spontaneously. When he/she points, *you* say the word.
- Offer choices to help stimulate naming what the child is looking at (e.g. 'Hmmm. Is it a *dog* or a *bird*?').
- Encourage copying of commenting. Use 'look' with exaggerated gesture and intonation.



Section 3

Additional activities for teaching language

These activities can be used to teach new vocabulary to children whose language is above one-word level (typically children who have been identified as needing input in Section 3). These activities focus on teaching a wider range of vocabulary items.

First, it is important to think about the topic that is currently being worked on. Identify key vocabulary from the topic list. Select about five new words at a time and, once achieved, move on to the next five. Once the second set of five has been achieved, mix them up with the first five to check that the child has understood all ten. Then introduce the next five and so on. Always go back and check that the child has remembered the older words. In this way, opportunities for practice and consolidation are provided.

Children will understand a word before they are able to use it and many will need lots of opportunities for over-learning and repetition. It is useful to keep a checklist of the words you are working on and tick them off when they have been achieved.

When learning new words, a multi-sensory approach is best. Use all the opportunities that you can:

- Experience the real thing by touching, looking and listening.
- Use objects.
- Use pictures, written words and symbols.

N.B. Some children will need more repetition than others.

There is no substitute for first-hand experience. However, it would be impossible to learn all our vocabulary in this way. It is more achievable for young children and it may help to select topics with this in mind.

Games

Fetching

- Collect together some objects or pictures that represent the topic words you are teaching (e.g. the weather – sunshine, rain, puddles, umbrellas).
- Ask the child to bring or find ‘the umbrella’.
- Help and guide the child to select the correct item – having no choice will make the task easier.
- Praise and emphasise the name (e.g. ‘Yes, it’s an umbrella’).
- This game can be made more difficult by adding more items.
- Once the child can consistently find the items asked for, see if he/she will name them, and ask ‘What did you find?’

Hiding

- Collect together small objects or pictures using a theme (e.g. transport – trains, cars, planes).
- Use two containers which the items will fit under.
- Hide one of the toys under a container and ask the child to find it.
- Emphasise the name as above.
- You can make this game harder by hiding two toys under two containers and saying ‘Let’s find the car’. Encourage the child to look under both containers.

Posting games

- Use items/pictures from your target vocabulary.
- Make a large cardboard box with a hole cut into the top like a post box. Play a game where the child posts requested items into the box.
- Start with only two items to choose from (e.g. car and train, and ask for ‘train’). Then increase the number of items to choose from to three, then four.
- Once the child has selected correctly, then you name it again.
- To encourage expression before the child posts the item, ask him/her ‘What did you find?’ You could also try a turn-taking game where the child tells *you* what to post.

Category sorting and matching

Sorting games can be lots of fun and can take place in lots of different places (e.g. sorting clothes, food, toys). The possibilities are endless. This type of game helps reinforce target vocabulary.

- At first you may need to show the child which items go together.
- Always say the category name too (e.g. ‘Yes, it’s a chair – it goes with the furniture’). In this way you are teaching the child that some words can be organised together.
- Go through both of the categories you have chosen (e.g. animals and food).
- Now mix the two groups up and see if the child can sort all the things that go together once you have started the run. This helps the child lay down visual as well as auditory representations of the words.
- You could make this activity more fun and functional by putting the items in places you might find them (e.g. animals on the farm, clothes in a wardrobe).

Lotto

This type of game can be adjusted to fit almost any purpose and is popular with individuals and groups.

- Make up lotto boards with the vocabulary you want to develop.
- Place matching pictures in the middle of the table face up.

- The adult names a picture and the child finds it and places it on his/her board.
- To make the game harder, in a small group, give each child a board whilst the adult has the matching cards face down. The adult says the name of one of the pictures without showing the children. The child with that picture on his/her board has to put his/her hand up. The adult then names the picture again and gives the card to the child who matches it to his/her board. The winner is the child who covers all of the pictures on his/her board first.
- You could try asking children to name the pictures on their boards once you feel they can understand the pictures easily.
- Another game to play with the lotto boards could be to share out the cards to each child playing. Each child has a board. The children take it in turns to name something from his/her board, while the rest of the group have to check their cards to see who has this picture. Once the picture has been found, it is passed to the requesting child who places it on his/her board. The winner is the child who gets rid of all of his/her cards first.

When working with children at this level it is important to:

- Keep instructions short, emphasising one key word at a time.
- Use gestures to accompany verbal instructions.
- Hold up pictures to help children understand the spoken word (e.g. hold up a picture of a 'twig' when asking the child to 'fetch a twig').
- Show and demonstrate wherever possible.
- Use lots of verbal labelling of objects and actions throughout the daily routine.
- Call the child's name to get his/her attention before giving an instruction.
- Get down to the level at which you can get eye contact when speaking to the child.
- If the child does not respond to a direct question, try offering a choice. Rather than 'What's this?' ask 'Is this a dragon or a fairy?'

Not for distribution

Section 4

Not for distribution

Section 4

Not for distribution

Section 4.1

Remembering two things at a time



Why is this important?

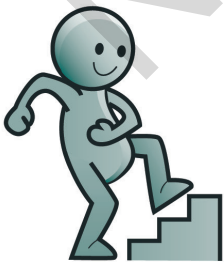
Verbal understanding is like a ‘list’ of things/items that need to be remembered in order to carry out the task. An example of a two-word level instruction is ‘Give doll a *banana*’ (e.g. children have to remember ‘doll’ and ‘banana’). If children can’t do this, it may be that their auditory memory is not yet sufficiently developed.

What to do

- Put out four everyday objects (e.g. cup, teddy, pencil, sock).
- Say ‘Give me pencil and teddy’. Make sure the child waits until the end of the instruction before responding.
- Hold out your hands for the items.
- Replace and ask for two different items.

N.B. Try to remember not to look at the items as you ask for them, or eye-point during the task as this gives clues over and above the meanings of the words only.

- Work towards the same aim via different activities:
 - ★ Play a shopping game, or put two animals into the field, or two items of clothing into the washing machine, etc.
 - ★ ‘Kim’s Game’ is good for developing memory and observation skills and is also great fun. Collect a small number of items on a tray and cover them with a cloth. Sit in a group where all the children can see the tray. Take away the cloth and allow the children time to scan the items carefully. Re-cover the tray then ask each child which items they can remember. The one who remembers most wins the game.

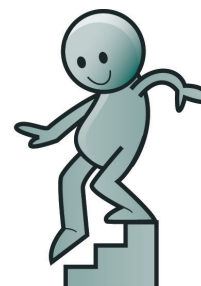


Step up

- The child has to wait for you to say ‘Go’ before collecting the objects, or the child has to walk across the room to collect the items.
- Gradually lengthen the time between the instruction being given and the ‘go’, or extend the ‘walk’ across the room.
- Increase the number of objects on the table to five.
- Ask for three items instead of two.
- Try using picture cards: name and then place them face down on the table; take it in turns to remember what was where.
- Extend this to a more traditional ‘pairs’ game.

Step down

- Do point and/or eye-point!
- Use signs or gestures.
- Reduce the number of items on the table to three.
- Start by asking for one thing.
- Ask for things in the order they are set out on the table (left–right).
- If the child finds it difficult to wait until the end of the instruction, place your hands gently over his/hers.



Section 4.2

Understanding simple describing words (adjectives) in sentences

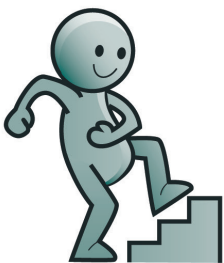


Why is this important?

Adjectives are describing words that tell us a bit more about the object or item referred to (e.g. 'wet hands', 'dirty shoes').

What to do

- Gather together some pairs of pictures. One of the pictures should show the item in a different state (e.g. 'dirty', 'happy', 'wet', 'broken', 'big'). The other picture should show the object in its 'normal' state.
- Put out two pairs (e.g. 'happy' girl and 'normal' girl; 'broken' cup and 'normal' cup).
- Ask the child to point to 'broken cup'.
- If this is successful, move onto other picture sets.



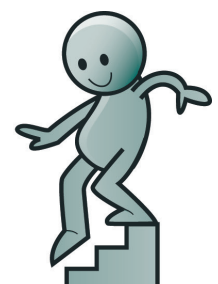
Step up

- Look through early story books. Ask the child to point to things (such as the 'broken chair' in Goldilocks). Remember to make sure there is always a second item in the pictures that is not 'broken'/'dirty'/'happy' because if there is only one object, for example, one chair in 'Goldilocks', then the child may not have understood the adjective 'broken' but just the object 'chair'.
- Encourage the child to use some adjectives to describe everyday activities (e.g. when washing – 'wet hands/face'; when playing in the garden 'dirty shoes/ball').
- Introduce the 'opposite' adjective as being 'not happy', 'not wet'. Can the child find the object that is 'wet' and the object that is 'not wet'?

Step down

- Use real objects (e.g. 'big' teddy and 'normal-sized' teddy; 'dirty' glove and 'not dirty' glove).
- Use gestures/signs alongside the describing word (adjective) and object name.
- Concentrate on one adjective to begin with (e.g. find lots of things that are 'wet'

- or 'dirty').
- Don't refer to the other item as being 'not dirty' or 'clean' as we are not expecting the child to differentiate between the adjectives at this stage (you can try this when 'stepping up').



Section 4.3

Understanding that 'no' plus an object is an early negative



Why is this important?

Children use negatives to describe the 'absence' or non-existence of an object (e.g. a child finishes his/her drink and says 'no juice'). Before children learn to use 'no' in two-word phrases, they must first be able to understand these structures and to use them appropriately.

What to do

- Gather together two favourite toys (e.g. cat, puppy, doll, Spiderman).
- Use just two toys to begin with.
- From a store of everyday objects, choose a few (e.g. ball, cup, hat, socks).
- Give an object to one of the toys (e.g. put the hat on the cat's head).
- Ask 'Who's got *no* hat on?'
- Encourage the child to point to the toy without the object.
- If the child points to the toy *wearing* the hat, say 'Teddy's *got* a hat, who's got *no* hat?'
- If this continues to prove difficult, prompt by guiding the child's hand towards the right response and reinforce it with 'Look, *teddy's got no* hat on'.

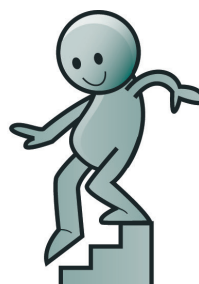
Step up



- Give each toy several objects (e.g. hat and cup to one toy, banana and socks to the other toy). Ask 'Who's got *no* socks?'
- Look at books together: talk about 'Who's got *no* ...?' so the child can try and find the person/toy referred to.
- Draw some pictures of objects with something missing (e.g. a house with no door, a dog with no tail). Ask 'What's missing?'
- Encourage the child to begin to use 'no ...' to describe what's missing.

Step down

- Use a sign or gesture for 'no' plus the object name.
- During play activities, use 'no' structures (e.g. 'This doll's got *no* drink').



Section 4.4

Learning to talk through play

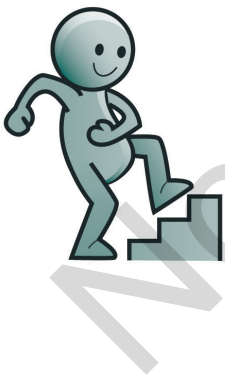


Why is this important?

Imaginative play is crucial for learning new skills and practising these skills in a safe environment. Play is vital in encouraging language development.

What to do

- Gather together dolls or other soft toys and one of the following:
 - ★ Doll's tea set.
 - ★ Empty bottles, sponge, flannel, toothbrush, etc.
 - ★ Bottle and bed (a shoe box will do).
 - ★ Shop.
- Encourage the child to act out situations through play (e.g. tea party, bath-time).
- Talk to the child about what he/she is doing.
- Get a doll/teddy/favourite toy/playmobile figure for yourself and play alongside the child to show what to do. Talk to *your* doll so the child can hear – keeping your sentences short and just using the words you need (e.g. 'doll drink', 'doll sleep').

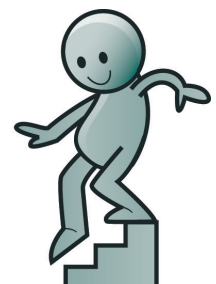


Step up

- Suggest more complex sequences (e.g. 'We went to the shop today. Let's pretend *doll's* going to the shop').
- Ask questions about what is happening (e.g. 'What's doll doing? Is doll eating or sleeping?').
- Suggest things that extend the play (e.g. 'Doll's woken up. Does doll want a drink?').

Step down

- Act out sequences together and encourage the child to copy.
- Use the toy and accessories alongside real activities. For example, bath the doll at the same time as the child is being bathed. Talk to the child as you are washing him/her and comment on what the child is doing (e.g. 'wash doll', 'wash tummy').



Section 4.5

Understanding more complex instructions



Why is this important?

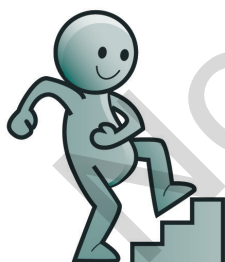
This activity will help children follow three key words in a sentence, thereby developing verbal understanding. You can find more information about this in the *WellComm Handbook* (pages 37–41).

What to do

- Three-word level instructions can be given during any and all daily activities. In this way teaching and learning opportunities are available throughout the day.
- Gather together the following:
 - ★ Doll, teddy (or alternative toy character).
 - ★ Flannel, hair brush.
- Play together using the items to ‘wash’ and ‘brush’ doll/teddy’s body parts.
- Encourage the child to listen and then give an instruction using three key words:
 - ★ ‘Wash teddy’s feet.’
 - ★ ‘Brush doll’s hair.’
 - ★ ‘Brush doll’s hand.’

N.B. Try to remember not to look at, point to or give any visual clues (you can do this if you need to ‘Step down’).

- If the child doesn’t quite get it right, acknowledge what he/she has managed, repeat the instruction and then gently prompt/guide the child towards the correct toys. Repeat the instruction as you guide or the child copies you.

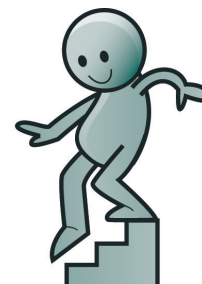


Step up

- Reduce the use of signs and gestures.
- Reverse the roles so the child tells *you* what to do or ask ‘What did you do?’ Don’t worry if the child only uses one or two of the words at first!

Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the key words.
- Use one of the characters only (e.g. doll) and give the instructions as above. The child will only have to understand two key words (e.g. for the instruction ‘Wash doll’s face’, the child needs to understand the words ‘wash’ and ‘face’ as there is no choice of who to do it *to*). When the child is successful, put teddy back and give the *same* instruction (e.g. ‘Wash doll’s face’).
- Look at the items as you give the instruction. You can gradually make this less obvious.



Section 4.6

Understanding and using 'doing' words (verbs) in simple sentences

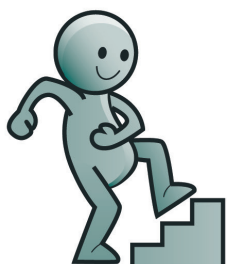


Why is this important?

This activity encourages children to build sentences using two key words: it also helps to widen vocabulary. This is an important step in the development of grammar.

What to do

- You will need:
 - ★ Teddy and doll (or two other favourite toys).
 - ★ Cup, brush, item of food, flannel.
- Put out teddy and doll and two different items (e.g. cup and flannel). Say:
 - ★ 'Make *teddy drink*.'
 - ★ 'Wash *doll*.'
 - ★ 'Make *doll drink*.'
- You could also ask the child to make doll or teddy perform an action that doesn't need any additional items (e.g. sleep, run, hop, sit, wave, clap).
 - ★ 'Make *teddy jump*.'
 - ★ 'Make *teddy sit*.'
 - ★ 'Make *doll sleep*.'
- When the child has successfully followed an instruction, ask 'What's happening?' Encourage the child to use a two-word phrase to describe (e.g. 'teddy jump', 'doll drink').
- If the child doesn't respond or uses a single-word (e.g. 'jump'), offer a choice:
 - ★ Adult: 'Make teddy jump.'
 - ★ Child follows instruction correctly.
 - ★ Adult praises: 'Well done. What's happening?' (points to teddy).
 - ★ Child: 'Teddy.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Is teddy sleeping or teddy jumping?'
 - ★ Child: 'Teddy jump.'

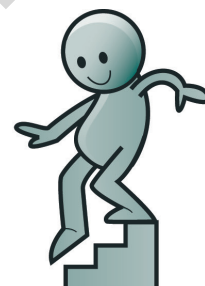


Step up

- Introduce more items/actions and vary the instructions.
- When looking at books, take it in turns to find something in the picture and describe what's happening. Pause to allow time for the child to fill in words: continue to provide vocabulary for new words.
- If the child spontaneously uses a two-word phrase (e.g. 'Joe eating'), you add *another* word (e.g. 'Joe eating *dinner*').
- Introduce less common action words (e.g. digging, throwing, crawling).

Step down

- Use gestures/signs to help understand the instruction.
- Use lots of repetition and demonstrate what you asked the child to do. Once demonstrated, repeat the instruction and see if the child can copy.
- Get the child to do it first and then comment on his/her actions (e.g. 'Marcus hop', 'Sunita jump').
- During play or when looking at books, talk about what toys or people are doing, using two-word sentences.



Section 4.7

Using 'in' and 'on' at the simplest level

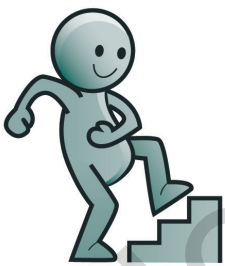


Why is this important?

Prepositions are words that describe the position of an object (e.g. 'in', 'on', 'under' and 'behind'). They are useful foundations for describing physical relationships in the world around.

What to do

- Gather together some toys and place them around the room: put them 'in' and 'on' things.
- As the child locates an object, encourage him/her to say where the preposition is being used (e.g. 'in' cup; 'on' bed).
- If the child makes a mistake or doesn't respond, offer a choice (e.g. 'Is the car *in* or *on* the box?').
- When all the toys have been seen, change places and encourage the *child* to place them this time, and then tell *you* where to look, using the preposition.

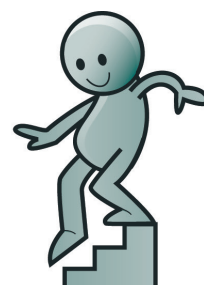


Step up

- Encourage the child to *use* two words to describe where the object is hidden (e.g. 'in' cup).
- Once 'in' and 'on' are consistent, introduce 'under'.
- As you share books, encourage the child to use prepositions to describe where people or things are (e.g. ducks 'in' pond; lady 'on' chair).
- Try *hiding* objects for the child to find, describing where to find them.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures to support the spoken words.
- Place all the objects 'on' things to begin with. Then introduce 'in' when the child is using 'on' consistently.
- Offer choices (e.g. is it '*on*' box or '*in*' box?).
- Take it in turns to say where things are – this takes the pressure off the child.



Section 4.8

Adding 'ing' to describe an action

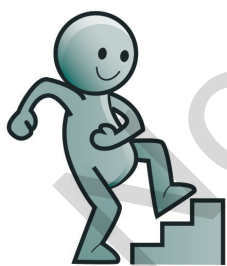


Why is this important?

The present tense 'ing' is used following an action word to describe something that is happening now (e.g. 'boy running', 'girl hopping'). This is important for the development of grammatical skills.

What to do

- Look at books together and talk about what people, animals, etc. are doing.
- Use phrases to help, e.g.
 - ★ 'That boy is running, what about him, he's ...'
- Offer choices: 'Is the boy running or walking?'
- If the child responds correctly, praise and repeat the sentence back, e.g.
 - ★ 'Well done, the boy is walking.'
- If the child responds incorrectly (e.g. says 'boy walk'), do the following:
 - ★ Praise for trying.
 - ★ Repeat the sentence emphasising the missed element (e.g. 'Boy walking. Can you tell me what the boy is doing?').
- Talk about what toys are doing during play and give choices relating to the child's play, e.g.
 - ★ Child playing with cars: 'Is the car driving or walking down the road?'
 - ★ Child playing in home corner: 'Is teddy sleeping or washing?'

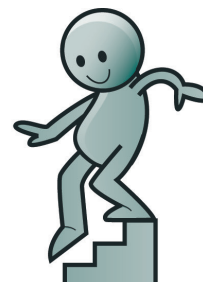


Step up

- Don't offer choices.
- If the child responds without the 'ing' (e.g. 'boy run'), pause to see if he/she can spontaneously correct.
- Build up to expect two-word phrases, such as person + 'ing' (e.g. 'teddy eating') or 'ing' + object (e.g. 'eating apple').
- Model sentences where the 'is' is included (e.g. 'boy is running').

Step down

- Emphasise the 'ing' part of the verb when reading or looking at books together. Talk about what people are doing when out-and-about.
- You may need to use the verb only at first.
- Work with a small store of familiar verbs.
- Model 'ing' using puppets (e.g. 'waving').
- Emphasise the 'ing' part of 'doing' when you ask a question (e.g. 'What is he doing?').



Section 4.9

Understanding and using pronouns: 'I', 'you' and 'we'



Why is this important?

Pronouns are words that replace the name of a person (e.g. instead of the speaker saying '*Mummy* would like a cup of tea', *Mummy* refers to herself as '*I*'). When asking someone else a question, '*you*' is used instead of the name of the person (e.g. '*Did you* see the car?' instead of '*Did Sammy* see the car?'). This is another step in the development of grammar.

What to do

- Set up a pretend tea party.
- Gather together cups, plates, plastic cutlery, foods, pretend kettle and teapot, etc.
- Play modelling pronouns, e.g.
 - ★ '*I* want some tea.'
 - ★ '*Sunil*, do *you* want some tea?'
- Set up situations where you can model '*I*' and '*you*' and then ask a question, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: '*I* put my coat on, what are *you* doing *Sunil*?'
 - ★ Child: '*I* put coat on.'

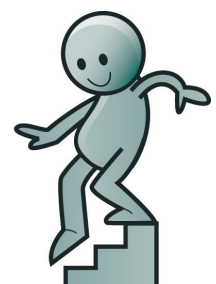


Step up

- Take photos of the child enjoying familiar activities, such as riding a bike, shopping with mum, eating dinner. Encourage the child to describe the pictures, using '*I*'.
- Encourage role-play using the pronouns. Try including teddy or another toy. You can both ask questions: '*Barney*, what do you want to drink?' Take turns to be the toy: '*Monkey* says I like bananas best!'

Step down

- Continue to emphasise the pronouns in your own speech.
- Use gestures as necessary (e.g. point to yourself when saying '*I*'; point to the child when saying '*you*' and both when using '*we*').
- Guide the child's hand to point to himself/herself as you model sentences.



Section 4.10

Learning to use 'big' and 'little'

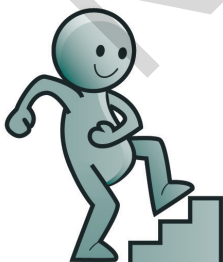


Why is this important?

'Big' and 'little' are important opposites. They form the building blocks of more abstract concept development and give children a means to describe the world around them. They are often amongst the earliest adjectives (describing words) that children learn. Usually 'big' is learned before 'little'.

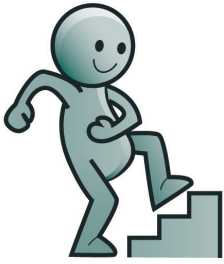
What to do

- Gather together:
 - ★ A selection of objects – one 'big' and one 'little' (e.g. 'big' cup and 'little' cup; 'big' pencil and 'little' pencil).
- Explain that you are going to take it in turns to tidy up and put the things away into a box/bag.
- Put out a pair of items (e.g. two cups, one 'big' and one 'little'). Tell the child to find the 'big cup'. Put it in the box.
- Ask the child:
 - ★ Adult: 'What did you put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: 'Big (cup)'.
- Point to the remaining cup:
 - ★ Adult: 'What shall I put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: 'Little (cup)'.
- During outdoor play, ask the child to jump into a 'big'/'little' hoop. 'Step up' by asking: 'Which hoop are you in?'
- There are numerous opportunities throughout the day for teaching 'big' and 'little' – laying the table ('big' spoon, 'little' spoon), matching shoes, etc.



Step up

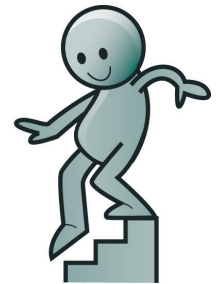
- Increase the selection of 'big'/'little' items so the child has to use a two-word phrase (e.g. 'big'/'little' + object name).
- Use 'bye-bye' or 'gone' as you post the item:
 - ★ 'Bye-bye big cup.'
 - ★ 'Big cup gone.'
- Use pictures as well as real objects.
- Encourage the use of 'big'/'little' items + where it's going (e.g. 'big cup in the box').



- Ask: 'Where's the *big* cup?'
 - ★ Child: 'In (the) box.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Yes, *big* cup is in the box.'
- Have a tea party with a 'big'/'little' doll/teddy or use 'big'/'little' plates. Take turns to give instructions relating to 'who' the food is given to or on what size plate.
- Draw and colour 'big' and 'little' things. Can the child tell you what he/she is colouring?
- Extend the ideas into other play or daily routines (e.g. as you fill the 'big' jug with water or use the 'little' bucket to make a little sandcastle, etc.).
- Look at picture books and find things that are 'big' and things that are 'little'.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures for 'big' and 'little'.
- Offer choices (e.g. 'Is it a *big* cup or a *little* cup?').
- Although you can use both items, begin by asking only for the 'big' one until the child is managing this consistently.
- Model the sentence:
 - ★ Adult: 'What did *you* put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: No response.
 - ★ Adult: '*Little* cup. What did you put in?'
 - ★ Child: 'Little (cup).'



Other things to try: 4a

Understanding three key words (i)



Why is this important?

Children need to gradually increase the amount of information they can take in at any one time as they learn to respond to longer and more complex instructions. These activities can easily form part of everyday routines. As adults, we give these kinds of instructions without even thinking about them, but we need to consider the language level we use (for more help with this, refer to the *WellComm Handbook*).

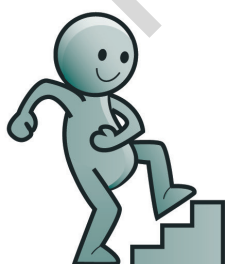
Here are three variations on the theme of helping children to understand three key words:

What to do

- Gather together the following toys/objects:
 - ★ Doll, monkey (or alternative toy characters)
 - ★ Two boxes, two bags and a variety of objects
- Place a box and a bag in front of each of the toy characters. Explain 'This is doll's box and bag; this is monkey's box and bag'.
- Put out two–three objects and encourage the child to listen and follow the instructions you give using three key words:
 - ★ 'Put the *brush* in *monkey's box*.'
 - ★ 'Put the *key* in *doll's bag*.'
 - ★ 'Put the *pencil* in *monkey's bag*.'

N.B. If you are checking three-word level understanding, remember not to look at, point to or give any visual clues when showing the child what you want him/her to do.

- If a child can't manage the task, repeat the instruction, and then gently guide him/her to the right toys. Give the instruction again as the child copies or is shown what to do.

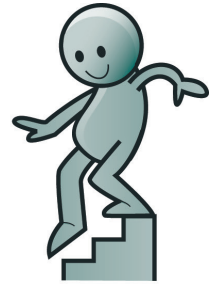


Step up

- Reduce the number of signs and gestures used.
- Add more objects to choose from (four, five or six) to put into the box/bag.
- Include another character (e.g. toy dog) who also has a box and a bag.
- Encourage the child to tell you what he/she has done.

Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the key words.
- Give the child an object (e.g. key, cup) and say:
 - ★ 'Put the key in *teddy's box*.'
 - ★ 'Put the cup in *doll's bag*.'
- To do this, the child needs to understand two elements only. Once he/she can consistently do this, return to the original activity.
- Show a photograph of the desired outcome and emphasise what you want the child to do.



Other things to try: 4b

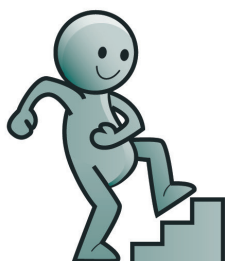
Understanding three key words (ii)

What to do

- Gather together the following toys/items:
 - ★ Toy/real fruit
 - ★ Big and little bag
 - ★ Big and little box
- Play a game putting the shopping away into bags and boxes.
- Encourage the child to listen and follow the instructions you give using three key words:
 - ★ 'Put the *apple* in the *big box*.'
 - ★ 'Put the *orange* in the *little bag*.'
 - ★ 'Put the *banana* in the *big bag*', etc.

N.B. If you are checking three-word level understanding, remember not to look at, point to or give any visual clues when showing the child what you want him/her to do.

- If a child can't manage the task because it's too hard, repeat the instruction and then gently guide him/her to the right toys/fruit. Give the instruction again as the child copies or is shown what to do.

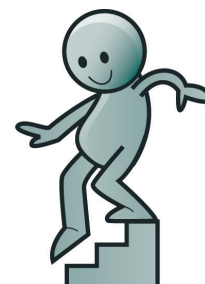


Step up

- Reduce the number of gestures/signs so the child is relying solely on verbal understanding.
- Increase the number of different kinds of fruit to four, five or six.
- Add another item to put the fruit in (e.g. a big and little cup/bag).

Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the key words.
- Adjust the word level: give the child the piece of fruit (e.g. apple) and give the instructions as above. The child will only have to understand two key words at this stage. For example, for the instruction 'Put the apple in the big box', the child will only have to understand the words 'big' and 'box' as there is no choice of fruit. Once the child is successful here, replace the toys but this time with a choice of fruit. Give the same instruction again (e.g. 'Put the apple in the big box').



Other things to try: 4c

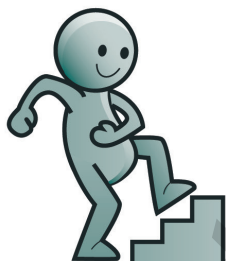
Understanding three key words (iii)

What to do

- Gather together the following toys/objects:
 - ★ Two figures (e.g. Bob the Builder, Spiderman, doll, teddy)
 - ★ A toy bed and a toy chair
- Show the child that you can make the characters perform different actions (e.g. jump, stand, sit) on the toy chair or bed. Encourage the child to copy your play.
- Encourage the child to listen and follow the instructions you give using three key words:
 - ★ 'Make *Bob* jump on the *chair*.'
 - ★ 'Make *Spiderman* sit on the *bed*.'
 - ★ 'Make *Spiderman* sleep on the *bed*.'

N.B. If you are checking three-word level understanding, remember not to look at, point to or give any visual clues when showing the child what you want him/her to do.

- If a child can't manage the task, repeat the instruction, and then gently guide him/her to the right toys. Give the instruction again as the child copies or is shown what to do.

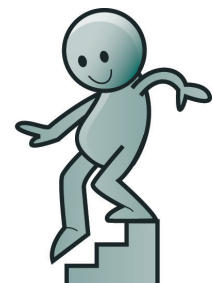


Step up

- Increase the number of characters to three or four.
- Increase the number of places where the characters can jump, sleep – add a table or cupboard perhaps.

Step down

- Use gestures/signs alongside the key words.
- Adjust the word level: give the child one of the characters (e.g. Bob the Builder) and give the instructions as above. The child will only have to understand two key words at this stage (e.g. 'Make Bob jump on the chair' – the child will only have to understand 'jump' and 'chair' as there is no choice of who is going to do it).
- Once the child is successful here, replace the toys but this time with both toy characters. Give the same instruction again (e.g. 'Make Bob jump on the chair').



Other things to try: 4d

Taking turns in a small group



Why is this important?

Communication is a two-way process: to be successful communicators children must learn to take turns as speaker and listener. There are more ideas for group activities to improve communication skills in the *WellComm Handbook*.

What to do

- Sit in a circle with a small group of (three) children and try:
 - ★ Rolling a ball/throwing a beanbag to each other, saying ‘Ellie’s turn, Ishmail’s turn’, etc.
 - ★ Passing a box of puzzle pieces, bricks, stacking cups, etc. round the circle. Play music and when the music stops, one child should take out an object and put a piece in the puzzle, a brick on the tower, etc.
 - ★ Playing games, such as skittles or team games, where one child runs up and back, then the next, taking it in turns.

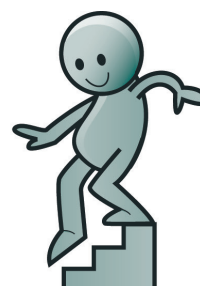


Step up

- Increase the size of the group.
- Make each child’s turn longer so that there is a greater element of waiting.

Step down

- Start the activities with just you and one of the children: gradually introduce another child then another, building up so there are longer waits between turns.
- As you play, talk about what you are doing and whose turn it is next.



Other things to try: 4e

Matching colours



Why is this important?

Matching is the first stage in learning the names of colours. Children need to be able to match and then sort items by colour before learning to understand and then use the names of colours. This is developing peripheral skills so that the word/colour name can be paired with it.

What to do

- Start with the four primary colours (red, yellow, green, blue).
- Gather together several items which include all four colours. These could be clothes, toys, tea sets, pencils – anything.
- Put out four pieces of paper, one of each of the colours.
- Put the items into a bag.
- Ask the child to take an item and put it with the corresponding piece of coloured paper. N.B. if the child is unsure, you may need to demonstrate this first.
- As the items are pulled from the bag, name the colour and the object (e.g. ‘blue pencil’).
- As the items are matched to the coloured paper, reinforce by repeating the colour and the name of the item: ‘Well done, it’s a blue pencil!’

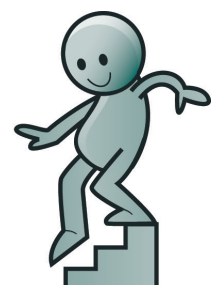


Step up

- Ask the child to put the items/objects back into the bag by asking him/her to find, for example, something ‘blue’.
- Use different shades – but still the same colour (e.g. dark blue, light blue).
- Use pictures as well as real objects.

Step down

- Reduce the number of colours to no choice, or a choice of two, and then gradually increase.
- If necessary, start with items of only one dominant colour (and all of the same shade) at a time before making a contrast.



Other things to try: 4f

Learning 'my' and 'your'



Why is this important?

Pronouns are words that replace the name of a person. 'I', 'you', 'your', 'me' and 'my' are learnt first as they relate to the speaker and listener.

What to do

- Gather together two bags or boxes – one for you and one for the child.
- Collect some everyday objects (e.g. toys, clothes, food, cars).
- Give the child an object (e.g. apple) and tell him/her whose bag to put it in, e.g.
 - ★ 'Put it in *my* bag.'
 - ★ 'Put it in *your* bag.'
- If the child is successful, reinforce by repeating the instruction:
 - ★ 'Well done, you put the apple in *my* bag.'
- If the child can't manage this, repeat the instruction, guiding him/her to the right place, e.g.
 - ★ 'Good try. You put the apple in your bag. Can you put it in *my* bag?' (Guiding the child's hand).
 - ★ 'Well done, the apple is in *my* bag.'

Step up

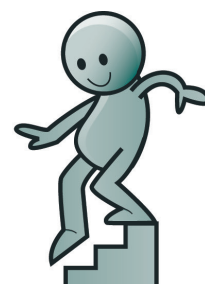


- Reverse the roles so the child is telling you where to put an object, e.g.
 - ★ Adult has pencil.
 - ★ Adult: 'Where's the pencil going?'
 - ★ Child: 'Your bag.'
 - ★ Adult places pencil in own bag and praises the child.

N.B. It is difficult to offer choices when working on pronouns as they change depending on who is doing the talking.

Step down

- To begin with, use gestures alongside the instructions, pointing to the child/yourself to indicate the pronoun.



Other things to try: 4g

Joining play sequences together

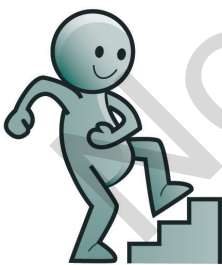


Why is this important?

Play is a crucial part of language development. Play is fun and provides multiple opportunities for children to practise skills they have already acquired and also to learn new ones (turn-taking, sharing, attention and listening, building vocabulary, increasing and varying sentence structures). Play and language develop in tandem as they each become increasingly sophisticated. Play also enables children to reflect on their experiences and make sense of them.

What to do

- Gather together a range of high-interest toys and equipment (e.g. trains, cars, doll house, animals).
- Follow the child's lead in play (e.g. if he/she chooses the animals, you play alongside with animals).
- Expand the play (e.g. if the animals are going into the field, show how they can eat the grass, have a drink or go into the barn).
- Demonstrate real-life sequences that are familiar to the child (e.g. washing a doll, drying the doll, dressing the doll).
- As you play, use short sentences to explain what is happening.
- This can be developed into a play script where language is associated with key actions.

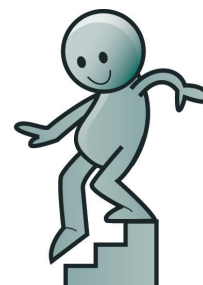


Step up

- Expand the sequences of play into a longer narrative. Following familiar routines is ideal for this (e.g. waking up in the morning, getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing teeth, walking to school).
- The home corner and themed areas are ideal to expand and develop sequences with increasing sophistication.
- Encourage the child to tell *you* what to do in the sequence (e.g. you could pretend to take a dog for a walk and let the child choose what to do next).
- Use junk objects to represent real objects (e.g. a cardboard box for a car).
- Read a familiar short story together and pretend to act out what happens. This can make an excellent small-group activity.
- Vary the language structures and the vocabulary you use.

Step down

- Demonstrate what to do (e.g. put the baby in bed, wake him up, get breakfast).
- Keep the order exactly the same.
- Learn the order with no words first.
- Add words, but then keep it exactly the same every time you do it. This is called a joint action routine.
- Start with short (two) sequences of play (e.g. wash and dry doll, cook and eat).
- Gradually build the sequences up to three (e.g. wash with water, wash with soap, dry).
- Demonstrate the first few sequences of play and encourage the child to add to these (e.g. 'wash teddy' by giving opportunities through demonstration).
- Offer choices about what could happen next (e.g. pretend you are going to the zoo: 'What do you want to see, the elephants or the tigers?'). Then add this to the whole sequence.



Section 4

Additional activities for teaching language: Section 4

These activities can be used to teach children who have achieved single-word understanding and are moving towards two-word level understanding and use (e.g. the WellComm Screening Tool has identified that they need more language teaching and practice within Section 4).

It is important when working through these activities to check that the child understands the vocabulary you are using at a one-word level first. Once the child understands the key vocabulary at a single-word level, this can then be incorporated into two-word level activities. Children need to develop their understanding at a two-word level before they are able to use mature two-word phrases.

Keep a checklist of the types of two-word level instructions you are working on and tick them off when they are achieved. When learning new language structures, experience always helps. Activity games are always very popular:

- Do it! 'Paul jump', 'Sarah run'.
- Use objects (e.g. 'Dragon jump', 'Mermaid swim').
- Use pictures (e.g. point to a picture of a unicorn running).
- Again, children will learn at different rates and some children will need more repetition than others.

Putting words together/understanding more than one word at a time

Usually it is easier to begin with noun (object name) words and with verb (action) words before including adjective (describing) words.

1. Noun + Noun (Object + Object)

- Put out three items. Ask the child to post/buy/point to one named object, e.g.
 - ★ Put out a carrot, a flower and a spade to help the child understand the task.
 - ★ From a choice of the three items, ask the child 'Can you point to the carrot?'
- Encourage the child to post/buy/point to the item you have named.
 - ★ Now move to two items and ask the child 'Can you point to the flower and the spade?'
- There are lots of variations that you can play based on this simple theme. Go with the child's interests and opportunities that present themselves as part of the daily routine.

- It is important to continue on with a variety of items until the child is confident at this level.

Other activities to work on *noun + noun* include:

Shopping	Tell the child which things to 'buy' from the 'shop' (i.e. on the other side of the room).
Posting	Tell the child which pictures/objects to put in the 'post box' (i.e. a hole in a cardboard box).
Washing	Tell the child which items of clothing to put in the washing machine/hang on a pretend washing line (i.e. a piece of string across the room).
Hiding	Tell the child which pictures/objects to hide around the room. You/another child then have to look for them. Don't worry if the child tells you where to look – children often seem to do this!
Puzzle	Tell the child which pieces to put back in the puzzle.
Fishing	Use a magnetic fishing rod/a fridge magnet on a piece of string. Put paper-clips onto pictures/photos of members of your family/friends. Tell the child which one to catch with the magnet.
Farms	Put some toy farm animals out around the room. Make some animal noises for the child to go and fetch those toys. When the child has collected them, he/she might like to choose whether to put them in the field/barn/give them some dinner, etc.
Feeding	Draw an animal face on a box. Use real objects/food or toys or pictures. Feed the animal named.
Slide	Make a chute out of cardboard tubes or a slide out of anything. Ask the child to collect items from a selection and put them down the slide.

2. Subject + Verb (Person + Action)

Group activity

- Children sit in a circle. The adult gives instructions using the child's name plus an action (e.g. 'Jada hop', 'Maisie dance', 'Aliyah laugh').
- Don't leave a gap between the name and the action unless the child is struggling. The idea is for the child to actively process two words presented in a chunk.
- You could pull an action picture out of a bag to show the child whilst giving the instruction.

Toy-based activity

- Use creatures from your topic areas (e.g. dragon, mermaid, troll) and ask the child to make one of them carry out an action, e.g.
 - ★ 'Make troll dance.'
 - ★ 'Make mermaid sleep.'
 - ★ 'Make dragon eat.'

Picture-based activity

- Collect together pictures from magazines and/or photos of family members/friends all carrying out different actions. Ask the child to select a picture named by an adult.

N.B. For the picture activity to be two-word level, the child needs to be presented with a choice where two different people are shown doing the two same activities (e.g. pictures of Alfie jumping, Alfie running, Ruby jumping, Ruby running).

2. Verb + Object (Action + Object)

Verbs	Objects
'Me', 'myself' and 'my'	
Brush	Body part
Wash	Body part
Dry	Body part
Toys	
Push/pull	Toys – transport
Roll/kick	Toys – ball, balloon
Throw/catch	Toys – bean bag, ball, balloon
Paint/colour	Tree, star, fairy, snowman, present
Growing things	
Dig/water	Garden, flower, vegetable
Pull up/plant (put in)	Vegetable, weeds
Paint/colour	Egg, duck, nest, bunny, flower
Weather	
Paint/colour	Cloud, sun, puddle, shadow, umbrella
Post/give me	As above plus clothes
Wash/dry/hang up	Clothes items
Fantastic creatures	
Paint/colour	Creatures – dragon, mermaid, troll
Brush/wash/dry	Creatures – dragon, mermaid, troll
Walk/run/hop/jump to	Forest, bridge, mountain
Exciting journeys	
Push/pull	Transport
Pack/wash/hang up/dry	Clothes or beach toys
Paint/colour	Bucket, spade, rubber ring, boat
Post/give me	Transport, clothes or holiday toys
Walk/run/jump/hop to	Transport

Group activities

- In the garden, demonstrate how to dig and water the flowers, vegetables and grass. Then the children take it in turns to follow instructions (e.g. 'Water the grass', 'Dig up the flowers').
- If a child does not follow the instruction, make it easier by giving a clue to one of the parts of the instruction (e.g. give him/her the water or point to the flowers).
- Use any two objects or pictures from your topics. Place them in front of the group and name (e.g. 'mountain', 'bridge'). Children take it in turns to run/hop/walk/jump to the object you name (e.g. 'Jump to the mountain', 'Walk to the bridge').
- Use simple line drawings of two of the objects or people. Demonstrate how to paint, colour and stamp one of these items. Then children take it in turns to decorate the pictures according to adult instructions (e.g. 'paint the fairy', 'stamp the aeroplane', 'colour the sun').

Toy-based activities

- Collect together some toys from your 'fantastic creatures' topic and a brush/sponge/towel. Give the child instructions using two key words (e.g. 'Wash dragon', 'Dry mermaid', 'Brush troll').
- Using your transport items, give the child instructions to push/pull the toys (e.g. 'Push the car', 'Pull the tractor').
- In the home corner, give the child instructions when playing with the doll's clothes, washing machine, etc. Give instructions with two key words (e.g. 'Wash the socks', 'Hang up the trousers').

Picture-based activities

- Place two or three different pictures out on the floor or on the table. Demonstrate how you can post a picture or give it to the adult. Then ask the child to give or post one of the items (e.g. 'Give me the car', 'Post the flower', 'Give me the mermaid'). This activity can also be done using real or toy objects.

General principles

- Keep instructions short.
- Emphasise two key words at a time.
- Use gestures to accompany your verbal instructions.
- Hold up pictures to help the child understand what you are saying. For example, if you're asking the child to fetch two items, hold up two pictures (e.g. hold up pictures of a twig and flower when asking the child to fetch a twig and flower).
- Show the child what you want him/her to do – demonstrate wherever possible.
- Use lots of verbal labelling of objects and actions throughout the daily routine. Do this using two-word phrases.
- Call a child's name to get his/her attention before giving an instruction.
- When speaking, get down to the child's level and make eye contact.
- If a child does not respond to a direct question, try offering a choice. Instead of saying 'What's this?' ask 'Is this a dragon running or a dragon jumping?'
- When the child is using single words, add one word on and repeat back (e.g. 'Lily's mermaid', 'Lily's mermaid swimming').
- Use opportunities as they arise. Lots of meaningful language teaching at this level can be done at mealtimes (e.g. laying the table, sharing/serving food).
- Language teaching and learning needs to be fun!

Section 5

Not for distribution

Section 5

Not for distribution

Section 5.1

Understanding 'in', 'on' and 'under' at the simplest level



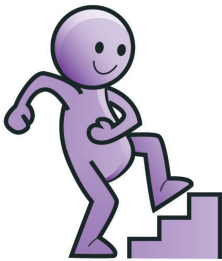
Why is this important?

Prepositions are words that describe the placement of objects. They are important in the development of relational concepts (i.e. describing where things are compared to others). Children need to understand prepositions as words on their own before they can be understood in sentences incorporating more information-carrying words.

What to do

- Put out a box or jar (something with a lid).
- Give the child an object (e.g. brick) and ask the child to 'Put the brick 'in'/'on'/'under' the box'.
- Give the child another item and repeat the game.
- The child only has to understand the preposition in this task as you have given no choice of object (brick) or place (box).

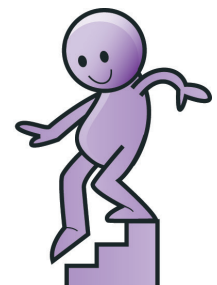
Step up



- Reduce the number of gestural cues.
- Add more items so the child has to choose from the object (e.g. key and spoon) and the positional word (e.g. 'in'/'on'/'under').
- Encourage the child to *say* where the items are (e.g. 'in'/'on'/'under' the box).
- Start to include other positional vocabulary (e.g. 'behind'/'in front').
- Reverse roles so the child has to tell you where to put an object.
- Share books and talk about where things are.
- Do this during daily routines around the house or when out and about.
- Play games where toys are being silly and put things in silly places (e.g. teddy puts a sock on his head, monkey puts the spoon 'in' the bath).

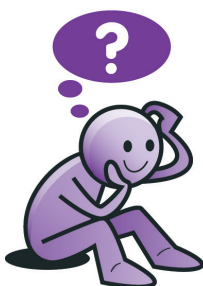
Step down

- Use signs/gestures to go with the preposition.
- Repeat the instruction, emphasising the preposition and guiding the child's hand to place the brick 'in'/'on'/'under' the box.
- Give the child the item and simply say the positional word (e.g. 'in').
- Practise one preposition at a time. For example, walk around the house putting objects 'in' things (e.g. put doll 'in' the bath, put the pencil 'in' the cup). Talk about the placement of objects (e.g. 'The cake is 'in' the oven', 'The spoon is 'in' the drawer').



Section 5.2

Learning to remember and then say the names of two things



Why is this important?

Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. For example, in the two-word level instruction 'Give Sam a cup', the child has to remember 'Sam' and 'cup'. If children can't do this, it may be that their auditory memory is not yet sufficiently developed. Auditory memory can be improved with practice.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of pictures of everyday things. These could be cards or cut out from magazines.
- Place a few cards (e.g. six) face-down on the table.
- Choose two cards but don't show them to the child.
- Look at your cards and say what they are (e.g. 'I've got a dog and a table').
- Ask 'Can you remember what cards I've got?'
- If the child is right, show your cards and reinforce: 'Well done! A dog and a table!'
- If the child finds it difficult or remembers just one item, repeat what cards you have, emphasising the key words (e.g. 'I've got *dog* and *table*').

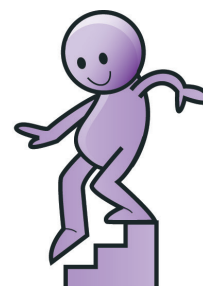


Step up

- Work towards remembering three cards.
- Choose different vocabulary (e.g. action words, not just the names of things).

Step down

- Start with only one card.
- Use gestures/signs for the key word/s.
- Prompt the child by saying the first sound or by giving a clue (e.g. 'It begins with "d"', 'It's an animal; it says "woof"').
- Allow the child to see the card first. This involves visual memory too and thus makes the task easier.
- Choose items that are within the same semantic category (e.g. animals, transport) not mixed vocabulary items.



Section 5.3

Learning to play with a friend



Why is this important?

Social play is an important part of children learning to become sociable and develop friendships (i.e. realising that they are not alone in their environment – there are other people with feelings, needs and wants too!). Children increase in communicative confidence as new skills are practised by watching and playing with others in a relatively safe/familiar environment. Social play is key to social and emotional development.

What to do

- Engage two children in identical play at a table or on the floor. Activities could be drawing, sticking, puzzles.
- Build a tower where both children have some bricks and take turns to put one on the tower. Start by guiding the activity and slowly move away to enable the children to continue.
- Equipment that requires two children (e.g. see-saws/double swings) are useful, as are toys that require ‘help’ (e.g. pushing each other in a car).
- Play hide-and-seek or ball games.

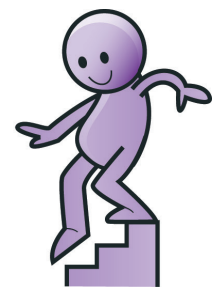


Step up

- Suggest an activity to the children and have less involvement yourself.
- Keep watching from a distance.
- Offer a choice of shared activities so that the children can become more self-directed.

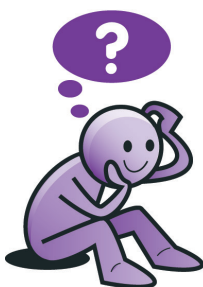
Step down

- Adult participation helps so that if problems occur they can be quickly rectified. They can also help to keep the action going.
- Use fewer bricks in the tower so that the activity doesn’t become too long.
- Use vocabulary that the children can follow to guide them (e.g. ‘George’s turn’, ‘Sharna’s turn’).
- Refer to the other child by saying ‘Look what Zain’s doing, he’s drawing a picture’.



Section 5.4

Learning the names of colours



Why is this important?

Colour names are adjectives often used to describe things. Children need to understand that colours are not inextricably linked to objects (e.g. trousers are not always blue). When children are able to match and sort objects according to colour, then they are ready to learn the colour names.

What to do

- Gather together some bricks or Lego blocks of four different colours (red, yellow, green and blue are ideal).
- Put out the bricks – one of each colour.
- Explain that you are going to build a tower together.
- Ask the child for a brick by colour:
 - ★ ‘Find the *red* brick.’
 - ★ ‘Put the *blue* brick on.’ etc.
- Always make sure there’s a choice of four colours and ask for the bricks in a random order.

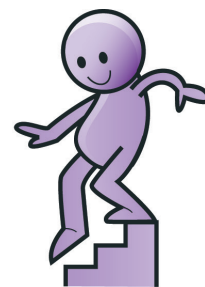


Step up

- Add harder colours (e.g. pink, orange, purple) or talk about different shades of colours (e.g. light vs. dark green).
- Swap over so the child has to tell *you* which colour to put on the tower.
- Name and sort at the same time – here the child decides on his/her own categories and sorts the items.

Step down

- Reduce the number of colours you introduce.
- Select colours that have the greatest level of contrast (e.g. black and orange).
- Use signs for the colours to help understanding.
- Ask for just the colour ‘red’ or ‘find me red’.

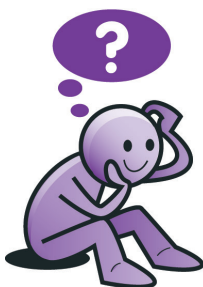


- Reduce the number of colours to two: perhaps choose yellow as a two-syllable word (so it sounds very different) and one other.
- Check that the child can match colours together (i.e. sort the bricks into their colours).
- Use prompts to guide the child's hand to the right brick.
- Look at the colour you want as you ask for it.
- Point to it as you ask.
- If the child can't manage two colours, teach one at a time. Focus exclusively on red for example, and point out all items that are 'red' (e.g. build a tower with just 'red' bricks, colour with 'red' crayons, point out 'red' cars/clothes, cut out and stick onto paper 'red' things from magazines and catalogues). When the child is ready, introduce another colour (e.g. yellow) and teach this in the same way before putting the two together.



Section 5.5

Learning the meaning of 'where'



Why is this important?

Wh- questions are an integral part of everyday conversations and routines (e.g. 'Where's your coat?'). Children need to be able to follow these instructions to be able to respond appropriately to questions and to move from a concrete to a more abstract level.

What to do

- Gather together some toys or objects and place them around the room.
- Encourage the child to find one item at a time by asking: 'Where's the ...?'
- If the child can manage this, move on to the next item.
- If the child responds incorrectly (e.g. by naming the item retrieved rather than where it is), repeat the question and give the answer, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: 'Where's the ball?'
 - ★ Child: 'Ball.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Where's the ball? On the table.'
- You could also try repeating the question and then start to model a response for the child to complete, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: 'Where's the ball? The ball's on the ...?'



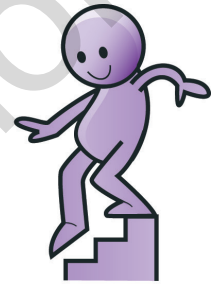
Step up

- Don't use any additional prompts (e.g. signs and symbols).
- Hide items and encourage the child to find them by responding to 'Where's ...?'
- Ask where things are kept that are not in the room (e.g. 'Where's your toothbrush?', 'Where are the pegs?').
- Tell a story about a character or characters visiting different places (e.g. a girl going to the shops to buy some items). At the end of the story ask 'where' questions (e.g. 'Where did the girl buy her trousers?', 'Where did the girl buy her shoes?', 'Where did the girl have lunch?').
- Use curriculum topics to focus on asking 'where' questions, e.g.
 - ★ Rooms in a house – 'Where do you go to sleep?'

- Use school topics to focus on asking 'where' questions, e.g.
 - ★ Vehicles – 'Where do you drive a car (land vs. sea vs. air)?'
 - ★ Food – 'Where do apples grow?'
 - ★ Clothes – 'Where do we put our gloves?'
- Make a cardboard template of a person and some cardboard clothes to stick to the template. For each of the clothes presented, ask where the item should go (e.g. 'Where do we wear socks?'). Help the child 'dress' the person. You could also play a dress-up game.

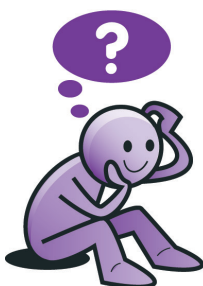
Step down

- Use a gesture or sign for 'where' when saying the target word.
- Introduce a picture/symbol as well as the gesture/sign. Point to the symbol as you ask the question – or even a written word.
- Model the correct response and ask the child to repeat.
- If the child points to 'where' the object was hidden, accept this and model the words yourself.



Section 5.6

Encouraging the use of three-word sentences

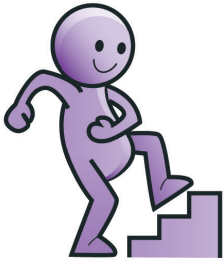


Why is this important?

As language develops, children need to be able to use more words to make longer sentences, using an increasingly varied vocabulary. This helps them combine vocabulary and grammar to express a wide range of meanings.

What to do

- Choose from one of the following:
 - ★ Teddy/doll or child's favourite toy and everyday objects (e.g. brush, cup, flannel).
 - ★ A book with lots of pictures of everyday scenes (e.g. children at the park, stories about going to the doctor/hairdressers).
 - ★ Pretend food and objects for a tea party.
- Start by describing what the child is doing (e.g. 'brushing doll's hair').
- Encourage the child to use three-word phrases by asking 'What are you doing?'
- If the child responds with a two-word phrase, 'add' another word to the sentence, e.g.
 - ★ Child is washing teddy's feet with a flannel.
 - ★ Adult: 'What are you doing?'
 - ★ Child: 'Wash feet.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Well done' and then adds '(You're) washing *teddy's* feet. Shall we wash something else?'
- If the child doesn't respond, offer a choice, e.g.
 - ★ Child and adult are looking at a book showing children playing in the park.
 - ★ Adult points at child on swing and says 'Look at that; what's she doing?'
 - ★ Child looks but doesn't say anything.
 - ★ Adult: 'Is the girl jumping on the bed or playing on the swing?'
 - ★ Child: 'Playing swing.'
 - ★ Adult praises 'Good' and repeats or adds a word 'Girl playing swing'.
- Everyday routines often provide the best opportunities for learning.

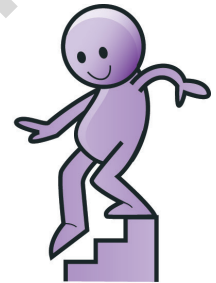


Step up

- Make it a game to take it in turns to point to characters in a book and say/describe/talk about what they are doing, e.g.
 - ★ Looking at a picture of a funfair.
 - ★ Adult: 'Look, a boy riding the horse; what can you see?'
 - ★ Child: 'Boy riding horse.'
 - ★ Adult praises and continues activity.
- Continue this game during everyday routines but also when out and about too, or engaged in less familiar activities (e.g. what are people doing at the dentist, in the café, on a building site).

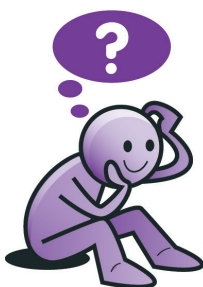
Step down

- Use signs/gestures to support understanding.
- Reduce the pressure by describing what is happening rather than asking a question.
- Sometimes just watch the child playing, commenting and providing vocabulary for new words (e.g. the child points at a picture of a penguin in a book and the adult says 'penguin').
- Use everyday routines to encourage language (e.g. 'Mummy's washing Jake's face; what shall we wash next?').



Section 5.7

Using 'under' in a simple game

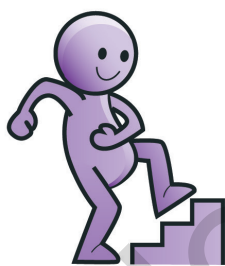


Why is this important?

Prepositions are words that describe the position of an object (e.g. 'in', 'on', 'under', 'behind'). 'Under' falls within the first group that children learn.

What to do

- Gather together some toys and place them 'under' things around the room.
- As the child finds something, he/she must say where it was, using the preposition (e.g. 'under' cup; 'under' bed).
- If the child uses the wrong preposition or doesn't respond, offer a choice (e.g. 'Is the car *in* the box or *under* the box?').
- When everything has been found, play the game again, this time with the *child* hiding the toys under things and telling *you* where to find them.
- 'Under' is easiest for some children because it has two syllables which you can emphasise as you speak – 'un-der'.

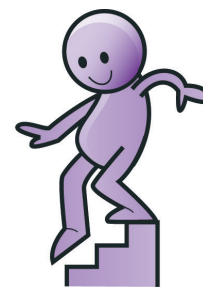


Step up

- Encourage two-word phrases (e.g. 'under cup').
- When the child is using 'under' consistently, reintroduce 'in' and 'on' and work towards identifying the difference between all three prepositions.
- Share books, encouraging the child to say what/where objects/people are (e.g. ducks 'under' tree; lady 'under' umbrella).

Step down

- Use signs/gestures for 'under'.
- Hide all the objects 'on' things to begin with. Then move onto 'in' when the child is using 'on' consistently.
- Give the child a choice of where the object is hidden (e.g. 'Is it *on* table or *under* table?').
- Reduce the pressure by taking turns to say where things are hidden.



Section 5.8

Beginning to use 'what' and 'where'

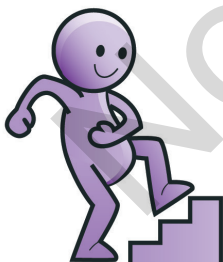


Why is this important?

Children need to ask questions to become active learners (i.e. to take part in their own learning). It is a critical tool in facilitating problem-solving too.

What to do

- What?
 - ★ Share a book and take it in turns to point to something and ask 'What is it?'
 - ★ At snack-time (either with other children or pretend with toys) ask the child/toys 'What shall we have to drink?'
 - ★ Put puzzle pieces/toys/pictures into a bag. Take it in turns to take one out and say 'What have I got?'
- Where?
 - ★ Again, share a book, taking it in turns to ask 'Where's the ...?' and then find it on the page.
 - ★ Sort the clean washing together: put it into piles of socks, pants, trousers, etc. or Mummy's, Daddy's, boy's, etc. Take it in turns to choose something from the basket and say 'Where (do the) pants go?'
 - ★ Use a variety of toys such as a doll's house and furniture, farmyard and animals, playground and children, etc. Take it in turns to choose an item (e.g. bed) and ask 'Where (does the) bed go?'

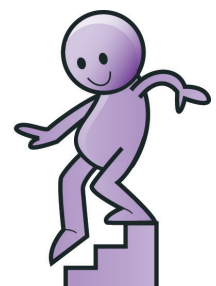


Step up

- Introduce other question words (e.g. 'who') and vary your questions and comments (e.g. 'Whose hat is this?', 'Where shall we put it?', 'What did we do?').
- Focus on the different meaning of each.

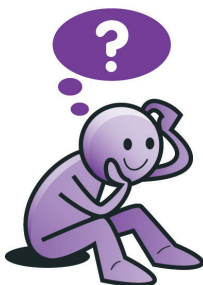
Step down

- Use gestures or signs for the question words.
- Don't worry too much about the grammar, stress the key words (e.g. 'Where (do the) pants go?')
- Use question words during everyday routines. Take it in turns so you are not expecting the child to answer all the time.
- Sometimes, when you ask a question, answer it yourself!



Section 5.9

Understanding what things are for



Why is this important?

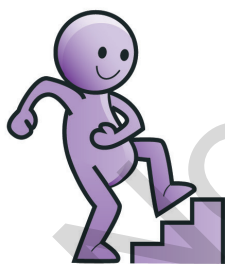
Children begin to be able to categorise things into groups by learning their functions (e.g. things to eat, wear, drive). This also helps acquire more vocabulary.

What to do

- Gather together some familiar toys/objects:
 - ★ Cup, brush, apple, chair, hat, pencil.
- Start by putting out two things and ask the child to find an object by its function:
 - ★ ‘What do we *eat*?’
 - ★ ‘What can we *sit* on?’
 - ★ ‘What do we *wear*?’

N.B. Remember not to look at or point to the object for which you are asking.

- Guide the child to the right choice if you need to. Repeat the instruction and demonstrate the function (e.g. ‘*Sit* doll on the chair’, ‘Pretend to *eat* the apple’).



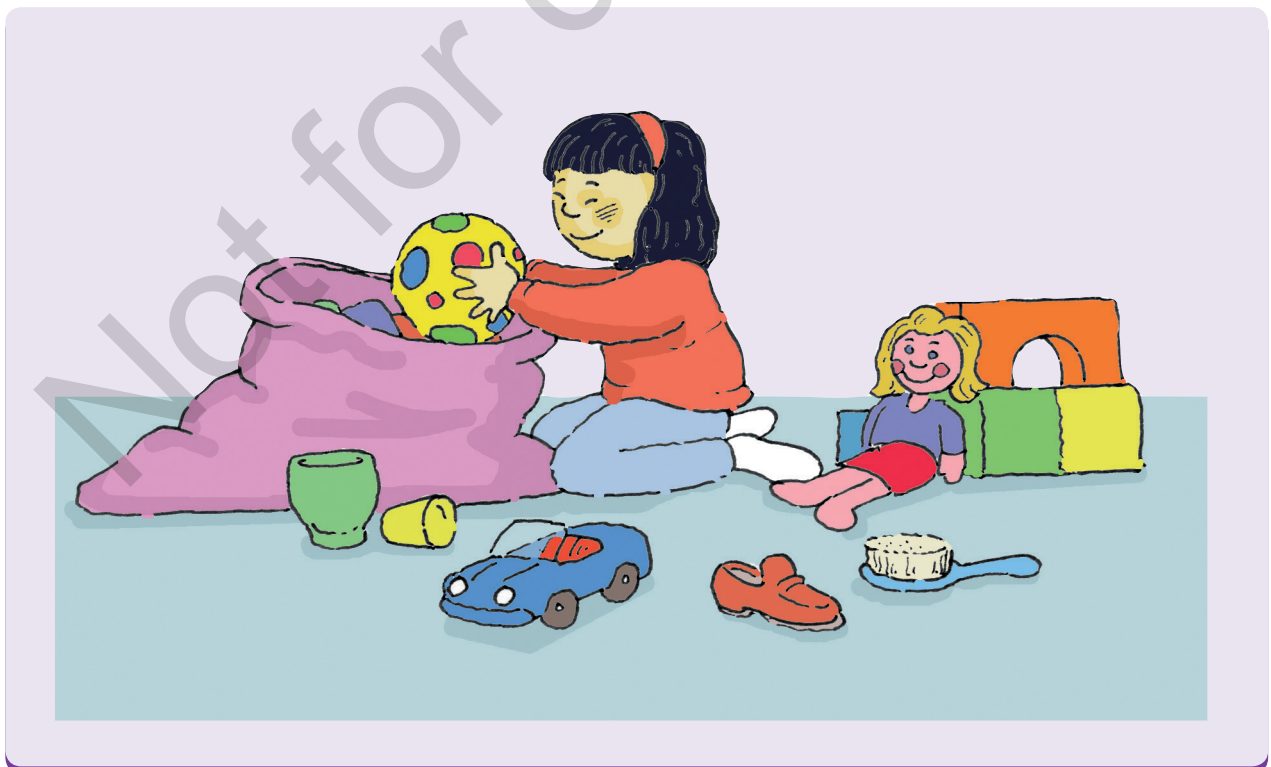
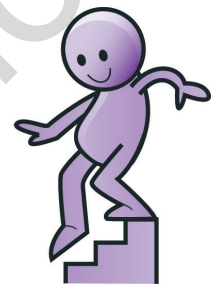
Step up

- Increase the number of objects so that the child has to find the right one from a choice of four or five.
- Include some things that share function (e.g. two things to wear) and ask the child to find *all* the things to eat with (e.g. spoon, fork) or *all* the things you can wear. Talk about the differences (e.g. cut hair with scissors but cut an apple with a knife).
- Use pictures of things from two different categories (e.g. things to wear and things to eat). Mix the pictures up and encourage the child to sort the pictures into their two functions.
- Share books and ask the child to find various things to wear or eat, etc. Talk about what people are doing with objects in the pictures.
- Talk about the function of objects that are encountered during everyday activities (e.g. getting dressed, walking to school, doing the shopping).

- Play a guessing game. Take it in turns to choose a picture card (these can be things cut out from magazines, etc). Keeping it hidden, describe the object, using function as the first clue, e.g.
 - ★ Adult chooses picture (scissors).
 - ★ Adult: 'You cut with it.'
 - ★ Child: 'Knife.'
 - ★ Adult continues with further clues (e.g. 'You cut paper/hair with it').

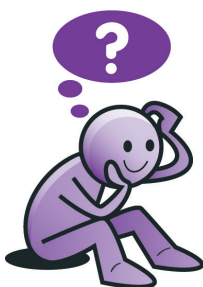
Step down

- Let the child play with the toys/objects and talk about what they are (e.g. wearing the hat, eating the apple).
- Use a gesture/sign along with the function.
- Use doll/teddy or a different toy character to demonstrate and name the functions (e.g. 'Doll's *wearing* the hat'; 'Teddy's *writing* with the pencil'). Emphasise the function and let the child copy the function using teddy.
- Sing 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush' and make up new verses miming the functions (e.g. this is the way we eat an apple, cut our hair, wear our scarf, drink from a cup).



Section 5.10

Using simple plurals/plural forms

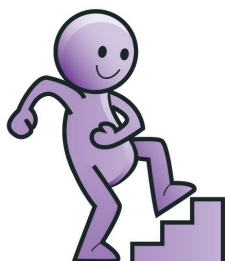


Why is this important?

Children need to understand and use plurals to be able to identify and describe more than one of something (e.g. duck vs. ducks; house vs. houses). It is fine for children to over-generalise the rule to begin with (e.g. 'fishes', 'breads').

What to do

- Make a scrapbook together.
- On one page, put a picture of an object and on the other page, put a picture of several objects (e.g. one dog on one side; lots of dogs on the other page).
- Either draw, print out, cut out, use stencils, etc. to prepare the pictures.
- Whilst the child is drawing/sticking, take the opportunity to refer to 'dog'/'dogs'.
- Talk about what you can see in the pictures, encouraging the child to say 'a dog'/'lots of dogs'.

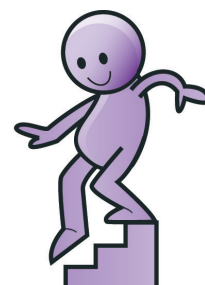


Step up

- Encourage the child to put plurals into sentences. As you share books and talk about what's happening, refer to plurals (e.g. 'The *dogs* are barking', 'The *cats* are miaowing').

Step down

- Give the child a choice, e.g.
 - ★ 'Are there lots of cats or lots of dogs?'
 - ★ 'Is it a dog or dogs?'
- Use a phrase to encourage the child to use the plural, e.g.
 - ★ 'Here's one dog, here are lots of ...'
- Only use plurals that follow regular rules (e.g. not mouse/mice; trousers).
- Model the correct use in everyday situations (e.g. if the child says 'grape please' give him/her one grape. When the child looks surprised say 'Oh, you wanted grapes').
- Emphasise the 's' on the end initially.
- When shopping and choosing fruit and vegetables, count them into the bag (e.g. one apple, two apples, three apples).



Other things to try: 5a

Understanding and responding correctly to questions requiring a 'yes'/'no' answer

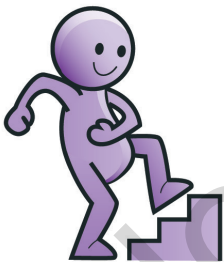


Why is this important?

Children learn to use 'yes' and 'no' in the right places initially as part of having their needs met (e.g. 'Do you need the toilet?', 'Would you like a drink?').

What to do

- Cut out some familiar pictures from magazines/catalogues – about ten to start with.
- Show the child a picture (e.g. cup).
- Say something about the picture which could be correct or incorrect, e.g.
 - ★ 'Is this a pencil?' – No.
 - ★ 'Do you wear this?' – No.
 - ★ 'Is this a cup?' – Yes.



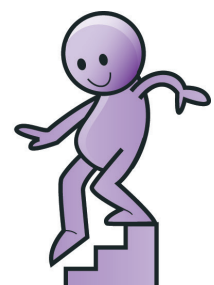
Step up

- Ask more difficult questions relating to function (e.g. 'Can we sit on it?', 'Has it got a handle?').
- Reverse the activity so that the child is asking you the questions.
- Offer a small selection of pictures (e.g. animals, fruit, furniture) face-down: take it in turns to choose one and ask questions to work out what the picture is.
- Try this with children working in pairs or a small group.

Step down

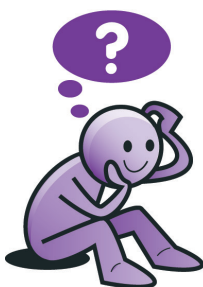
- Use gestures/signs to help the child understand the questions – lots of head nodding and shaking!
- Only ask questions relating to the object name (e.g. 'Is this a ...?').
- Ask questions which are all a 'yes' answer to begin with, then introduce a series of 'no' responses before mixing the two.

N.B. children often say 'no' more than 'yes' – this is part of growing up and not always language-related!



Other things to try: 5b

Understanding 'who'

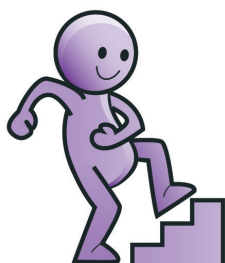


Why is this important?

Wh- questions are an integral part of everyday conversations and routines (e.g. 'Who's painting?'). Children need to be able to follow these instructions to be able to respond appropriately to the full range of 'wh-' questions.

What to do?

- Sit a small group of children in a circle: explain that you will be talking about what people are wearing.
- Make sure that the vocabulary relating to clothes is familiar and that everyone knows each other's name.
- Ask questions about what the children are wearing (e.g. 'Who's wearing a skirt?')
- If a child is unable to respond appropriately, model the right answer (e.g. 'Sophie's wearing a skirt').

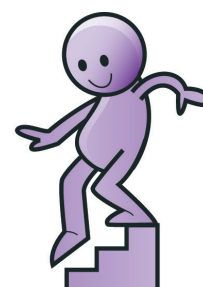


Step up

- Reduce the use of cues as you ask the questions.
- Ask harder questions (e.g. 'Who's wearing something warm?', 'Who's wearing something long and purple?').
- Include more children in the group.
- Generalise the understanding of the question by using it throughout the day (e.g. 'Who's playing with the bricks?', 'Who's eating an apple?').
- Try broadening the themes: these could include other concrete things such as what people look like (e.g. 'Who has brown eyes/long hair?' or more abstract themes such as 'Who likes painting?', 'Who's got a bike?'). This must be information that the other children in the group know.
- Use pictures and photographs.

Step down

- Keep the questions simple: 'Who's wearing a hat?' as opposed to 'Who's wearing long red socks?'
- Use gestures/signs as you ask the question – pointing may help.
- Work individually at first and then introduce one or two other children.
- Offering choices provides both a good model but also a clue (e.g. 'Who's wearing blue trousers, Hannah or Ahmed?').



Other things to try: 5c

Sorting things that go together and being able to name the category



Why is this important?

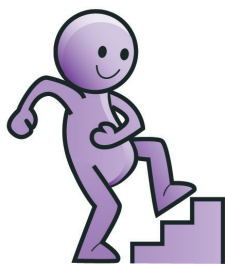
Sorting into categories develops vocabulary skills by allowing children to compare how objects are similar, how they belong within certain groups and also the function of the groups (e.g. food – eat, clothes – wear, vehicles – drive). It also helps children learn new vocabulary and the category name (e.g. transport, vegetables).

What to do

- Gather pictures from familiar categories:
 - ★ Clothes
 - ★ Food
 - ★ Animals
 - ★ Transport
 - ★ Furniture

N.B. the pictures can be cut out of magazines and catalogues or printed from the computer.

- Put out two boxes: choose two categories (e.g. food vs. clothes). Explain to the child that the food goes in one box and the clothes in the other. Give the child a picture (e.g. hat) and ask the child:
 - ★ ‘Is the hat food or clothes?’
- As you say the category names (e.g. food/clothes), point to the corresponding box to prompt the child.
- If the child is successful, reinforce: ‘Well done, hats are clothes. We wear a hat on our head.’
- If the child fails to respond or puts the hat in the ‘food’ box, try again. If the child still finds the activity difficult, ask:
 - ★ ‘Do we *wear* the hat or *eat* the hat?’ – or provide a physical prompt.
- If the child fails to respond or doesn’t correct the previous attempt, you post the picture and explain why, e.g.
 - ★ ‘The hat goes in the clothes box. We wear the hat on our head so it’s clothes. Let’s try another one.’
- When all the pictures have been sorted, ask the child to name the category (e.g. food).

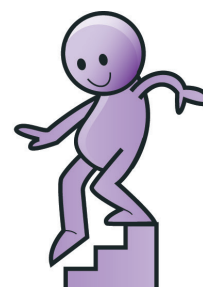


Step up

- Introduce a range of different categories (e.g. furniture, transport) and less familiar vocabulary (e.g. courgette, swimsuit).
- Try sorting into subcategories (e.g. hot vs. cold foods, winter vs. summer clothes).
- Play odd-one-out games where the child has to say why two pictures are the same and one is different.
- Let the child decide what the categories are (e.g. furniture/animals) and then let him/her sort the items.
- Have more than two categories to choose between.

Step down

- Start the category off showing where the items go. Have several pictures that are the same to provide reinforcement through repetition.
- Begin by sorting real objects (e.g. play food vs. doll's clothes).
- Have a toy-plate for the food to go on and a picture of a washing machine for the clothes so that the child can both relate the items to the category and also see what has already been matched.
- Start by teaching one category only (e.g. food) and then introduce clothes before mixing the two.
- Use food and clothes items that the child knows (e.g. apple rather than aubergine).



Other things to try: 5d

Develop listening skills through games



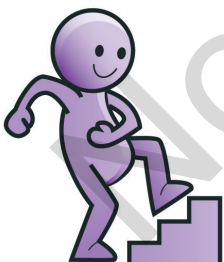
Why is this important?

Listening games help develop attention skills. Listening is a learned skill that needs to be taught and needs practice to develop.

What to do

- Sing nursery rhymes and pause before a key word. Encourage the child to fill in the missing word, e.g.
 - ★ 'Baa Baa Black ...?'
 - ★ 'The Wheels on the ... Go Round and ...?'
 - ★ 'Hickory Dickory Dock, the Mouse Ran up the ...?'
- Read well-known repetitive stories (e.g. 'The Gingerbread Man', 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', 'The Three Little Pigs'). Encourage the child to join in with the repetitive parts, e.g.
 - ★ 'Who's that tripp-trapping over *my* bridge?'
- ★ 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down.'
- Play 'Musical Statues'/'Chairs'/'Bumps' in groups. Children have to listen to the music and 'stop' when the music stops.
- Play a shopping game where you ask the child to buy one, two or three items.
- Read a story (e.g. 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'). The child has to listen for the name Goldilocks and perform an action when you say the word (e.g. stand up, hold up a picture of Goldilocks).
- Hide a musical toy and encourage the child to follow the noise to find it.

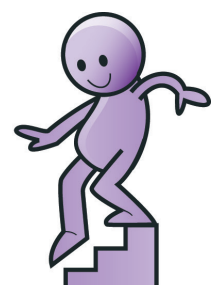
Step up



- Introduce more pauses in songs and stories as the child joins in the activity more and more.
- Listen to less obvious differences in sounds (e.g. animal noises or musical instruments).
- Introduce the instrument being played behind a screen. Give the child a couple of instruments to choose from – which one did he/she hear?

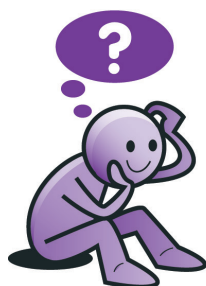
Step down

- Try the activities in a group of two children where the second child acts as a role-model for the first. The second child will demonstrate the activities and this may help the first child join in.
- Use a small range of activities and play them often.
- Pair a child with a mentor who will help to post items, stop and start the movements to the music, etc.



Other things to try: 5e

Using the names of colours in a two-word phrase

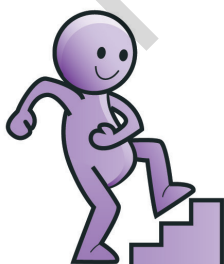


Why is this important?

Colours are adjectives used to describe things in the world around us. By joining the colour with the name of something, children begin to build two-word phrases containing an adjective plus an object (e.g. 'red sock'; 'yellow pencil').

What to do

- Put a variety of red, yellow, blue and green objects into a bag (e.g. pencils, bricks, items of clothing, coloured cups/plates from doll's tea-set).
- Ask the child to take an item from the bag.
- Start by naming the colour and object for the child (e.g. 'blue cup', 'yellow brick').
- Encourage the child to join in by pausing and waiting for a response. If the child doesn't respond, offer a choice:
 - ★ 'Is it a yellow brick or a blue brick?'
 - ★ 'Is it a yellow pencil or a yellow sock?'
- If the child responds with either the colour or object name, pause and then model the two-word phrase:
 - ★ Child: 'Brick.'
 - ★ Adult pauses to see if child spontaneously 'corrects' to colour plus object.
 - ★ Adult gives choice or 'models' the two-word phrase emphasising the 'missed' word (e.g. '*Blue* brick').

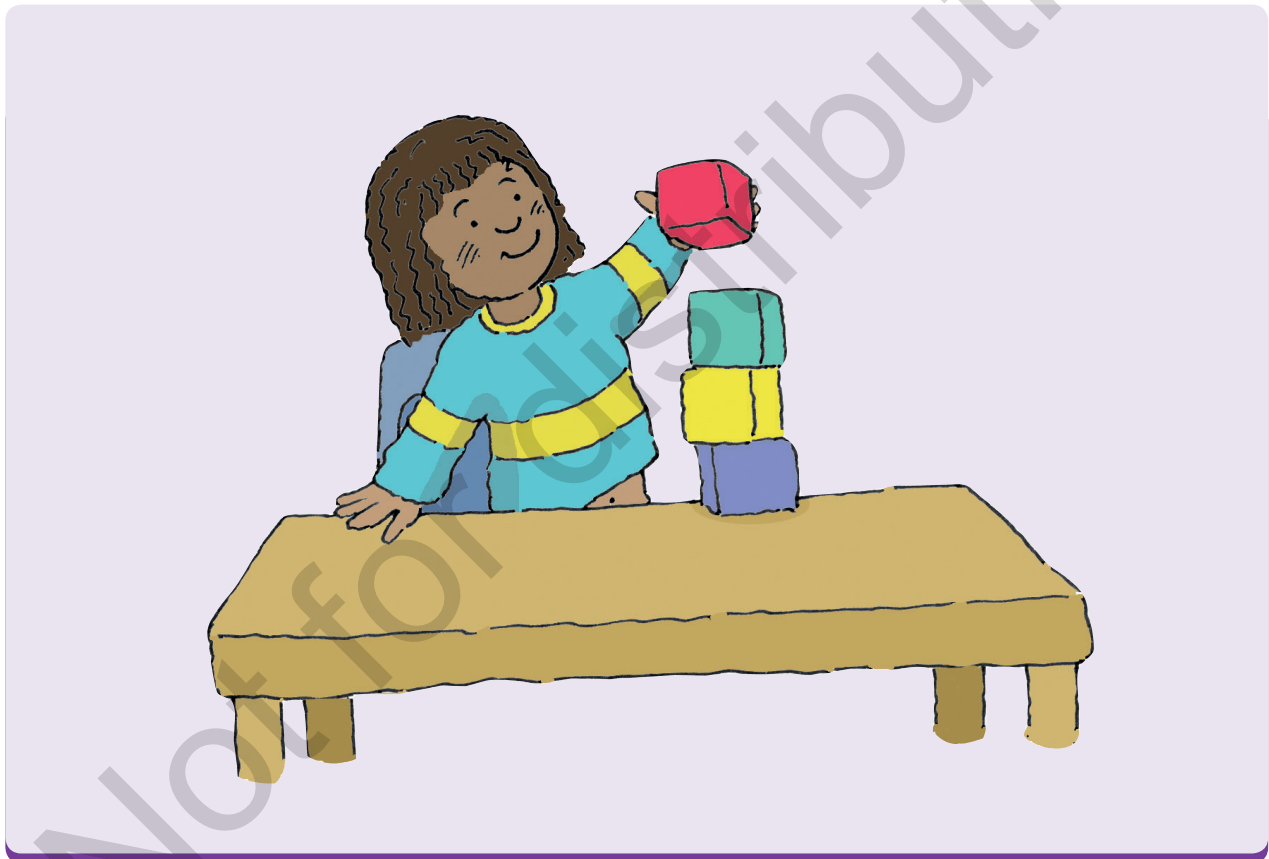
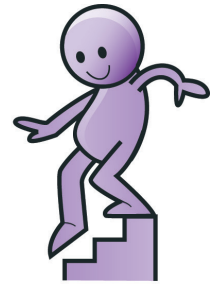


Step up

- Add items of more unusual colours (e.g. orange, purple, white).
- Share books and talk about the colours you see.
- Try to use the colour name in a short sentence (e.g. 'I found a blue boat', 'I can see a red pram').
- Add another describing word to the colour (e.g. 'Light blue', 'Dark red').

Step down

- Reduce the number of colours in the bag to one. This keeps the colour word constant in the two-word phrase (e.g. 'red hat', 'red car').
- Offer choices (e.g. 'Is it *blue* or *yellow*?')
- Use contrasting colours (e.g. red and black).
- Check that the child can point to the colours you are working with and use this knowledge in a game:
 - ★ Adult: 'Show me red.'
 - ★ Child points.
 - ★ Adult: 'Well done, it's *red*! *What* is it?'
 - ★ Child: 'Red.'



Section 5

Additional activities for teaching language

These activities can be used to teach children who have secure two-word level understanding (as identified in Section 4 of the WellComm Screening Tool) and are moving towards three-word level. Using the WellComm profile, children will have been identified as needing more help and practice to progress through Section 5.

It is important when working through these activities to check that the child understands the vocabulary you are using at a one-word level first and within two-word level instructions. If some of the vocabulary is not understood, use the single-word level activity sheet to teach these words first. Children need to develop their understanding at a three-word level before they can use it expressively.

All of the activities can be used to develop understanding and use of the target structure. Once understanding is in place, work on expression by asking the child to describe what he/she has done.

When learning new language structures, it is easiest for a child to experience the real thing first so use real life (e.g. 'Paul kick the ball', 'Sasha wash face'). Then use representational objects and toys (e.g. 'dragon eats banana', 'mermaid brush hair'). Finally move on to pictures (e.g. select a picture of a 'big red car').

However, this is not the case for all children. All children are different and have different learning styles. For example, some respond best to pictures first. The practitioner must be sensitive to this in order to ensure that children are making progress. Similarly some children will need lots of repetition and practice whilst others will not.

It is often helpful to use noun (object) words with verb (action) words before including adjective (describing) words.

1. Noun + Noun + Noun (Object + Object + Object)

- Begin with selecting two objects.
- Put out four objects to accustom the child to the task.
- Ask the child to post/buy/point to two of the named objects. Ensure the child waits until you have said both items before he/she selects them, e.g.
 - ★ Put out a carrot, a flower, a snail and a spade.
 - ★ From a choice of the four items, ask the child 'Can you point to the carrot and the snail?'
- Encourage the child to post/buy/point to the item you have named.
 - ★ Now move to three items and ask the child 'Can you point to the flower, the spade and the carrot?'
- Carry on with a variety of items until you are confident that this level has been achieved.
- Once the child is able to select three items from four consistently, increase the number of objects to five, then six.

Other activities include:

Shopping	Tell the child which things to 'buy' from the 'shop' (i.e. on the other side of the room).
Posting	Tell the child which pictures/objects to put in the 'post box' (i.e. a hole in a cardboard box).
Washing	Tell the child which items of clothing to put in the washing machine/hang on a pretend washing line (i.e. a piece of string across the room).
Hiding	Tell the child which pictures/objects to hide around the room. You/another child then have to look for them.
Puzzle	Tell the child which pieces to put back in the puzzle.
Fishing	Use a magnetic fishing rod/a fridge magnet on a piece of string. Put paperclips onto pictures/photos of members of family/friends. Tell the child which one to catch with the magnet.
Farms	Put some toy farm animals out around the room. Make some animal noises for the child to go and fetch those toys. When the child has collected them, he/she might like to choose whether to put them in the field/barn/give them some dinner, etc.
Feeding	Draw an animal face on a box. Use real objects/food or toys/pictures. Ask the child to feed the animal.
Slide	Make a chute out of cardboard tubes or a slide out of anything. Ask the child to collect items from ones in front of him/her and put them down the slide.
In the classroom	Ask the child to go and collect three items that he/she needs to complete an activity (e.g. 'Get your book, pencil and ruler').

These activities can easily be adapted for home use.

2. Subject + Verb + Object (Person + Action + Object)

Group activity

- Children sit in a circle. The adult gives instructions asking the child to perform an action using an object (e.g. 'Jade throw the beanbag', 'Maisie kick the balloon', 'Aliyah jump in the hoop').
- You could pull a picture depicting an action out of a bag to show the child whilst giving the instruction.

Toy-based activities

- Use characters from a specific topic (e.g. people who 'help' us). Ask the child to make one of them carry out an action using an object (e.g. 'Make the firefighter climb the ladder', 'Make the lollypop lady wave to the children').

Picture-based activities

- Collect together pictures from magazines and/or photos of family members/friends all carrying out different actions. Ask the child to select the picture named.
- To ensure the child understands a three-word level instruction, you need to ensure that the pictures offer a choice of person, action and object, e.g.

Choice of person	Choice of action	Choice of object
Alfie/Ruby	throw/kick	ball/balloon

- For target structure (e.g. 'Find Alfie kicking the balloon'), you will need pictures of:
 - ★ Alfie kicking the balloon
 - ★ Ruby kicking the balloon (demonstrates choice of person)
 - ★ Alfie throwing the balloon (demonstrates choice of action)
 - ★ Alfie kicking the ball (demonstrates choice of object)

3. Subject + Preposition + Place (Person + Preposition + Object)

- You will need to teach the prepositions at a single-word level before incorporating them into three-word level instructions.
- Start with 'in'/'on'/'under', moving on later to 'in front' and 'behind'. Use lots of play-based activities to make this fun.

'In'/'on'/'under'

- Focus on just one preposition at first, then contrast this with a second.
- Introduce the third preposition and contrast with the other two.

Matching (copying)

- Go and stand in a box.
- Tell the child 'I'm standing in a box'.
- Instruct the child 'Stand in a box' (i.e. the child has to copy/match your action).
- Do lots of repetition using lots of different equipment/resources (e.g. boxes, hoops, bins).
- Imitation (copying) is often the first step towards understanding.

Understanding

There are lots of different ways that understanding within this section can be taught. Above all, activities should be fun. This will help the learning process. Use lots of repetition and modelling. Children respond best to success so if a task is too hard, go back a step. When you are happy that the child understands the concept consistently and independently, it is time to move on to the next stage.

Naming and language use

- Ask the child to stand in the box.
- Now ask 'Where are you standing?'
- Target response 'In the box'.
- At this point you are still providing the child with a model to imitate.
- Use lots of repetition using different places/equipment/resources.
- Help generalisation: ask 'Where are you?' in other situations and environments.

Using two-word level principles, work on the child's understanding of prepositions at a two-word level before moving onto three-word level commands. To teach understanding at a three-word level, use yourself, toys and pictures to give instructions related to your current topic. Again it is important that children must make choices for each part of the sentence (e.g. 'Mum'/'Dad', 'on'/'under', 'table'/'chair'). It might help to demonstrate the different positions first.

Subject	Preposition	Place
'Me', 'myself' and 'my'		
Family members and children in nursery Toys from nursery	In/on/under In front/behind	Table, chair, car, bed, box, bag
Toys		
Toys from nursery Christmas items	In/on/under In front/behind	Table, chair, bag, box, tray, drawer Tree, present, star
Growing things		
Flower, plant, twig, leaf Spade, fork	In/on/under In front/behind	Plant pot, vase, bucket Shed, bucket
Weather		
Items of clothing	In/on/under In front/behind	Wardrobe, drawers, bag, box
Fantastic creatures		
Mermaid, troll, dragon	In/on/under In front/behind	Castle, house, bridge, tree
Exciting Journeys		
Holiday items and clothes Transport items Toy people	In/on/under In front/behind	Suitcase, bag Table, box, bag, chair, bridge Transport items

- You can work on prepositions in a group or individually using yourself, toys and then pictures – depending on the individual’s learning style. Reinforce the prepositions by incorporating them into general class and home instructions and labelling throughout the day to describe the position of things that you are using.

Adjectives

- Identify the adjectives that relate to specific topic areas (e.g. ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘dull’, ‘bright’ for weather; ‘big’, ‘small’ for growing things; ‘hairy’, ‘scary’ for fantastic creatures). Also think about the adjectives that relate to the class routine (e.g. ‘wet’/‘dry’, ‘noisy’/‘quiet’, ‘first’/‘last’).
- Teach adjectives in pairs (e.g. ‘hot’/‘cold’, ‘wet’/‘dry’). These are sometimes referred to as polar opposites. Making them very different/opposite ends of a spectrum can help facilitate learning.
- If the child understands one adjective from the pair, it might help to teach the other by using ‘not + adjective’ (e.g. if a child knows ‘hot’ but doesn’t know ‘cold’, use ‘hot’ and ‘not hot’ first).
- Work on matching and sorting first (e.g. put all the big items together).
- Next, focus on the understanding of the adjective. You may find it helpful for the child to experience ‘wet’/‘dry’ first by putting hands in water. Next identify ‘wet’/‘dry’ objects, and then use pictures that show ‘wet’/‘dry’ items.
- Finally, help children to *use* the describing word. Provide a model, offer a choice and ask questions.
- Use lots of different objects/pictures for the same adjectives (e.g. ‘hot’ sun, ‘hot’ water, ‘hot’ food). This will help the child to understand that the concept/adjective can describe a range of things.
- Reinforce understanding of the adjectives by talking about them throughout the day.
- This teaching is at a one-word level but you can easily move a child on to understanding these concepts in two- and three-word level activities using the principles described.
- Examples of language structures containing adjectives:
 - ★ Action + adjective + object (e.g. ‘kick the big ball’, ‘dry the red plate’).
 - ★ Adjective + adjective + noun (e.g. ‘find the big red car’, ‘find the big hairy troll’).
- There are lots of different ways to combine three words together. It is important to try them all. For example: verb + subject (possessive) + noun (action on person’s object)
 - e.g.
 - ★ ‘Washing Daddy’s car.’
 - ★ ‘Brushing troll’s hair.’
 - ★ ‘Pushing Tyrone’s aeroplane.’

General principles

- Keep instructions short emphasising three key words at a time.
- Use gestures to accompany your verbal instructions.
- Hold up or draw pictures to help the child understand.
- When sending children on errands, you could give them a photo of the place they need to go to, the person they need to visit, or a picture/drawing of the item they need to ask for.
- Show /demonstrate wherever possible.
- Use lots of verbal labelling of objects, actions and adjectives throughout the daily routine. Do this using three-word phrases.
- Call the child's name to gain attention before you give an instruction.
- Get down to the child's level and use eye contact when speaking.
- Try offering a choice (e.g. instead of saying 'What's this?' ask 'Is this a red car or a blue car?').
- When the child uses two words, add words on and repeat back to the child, e.g.
 - ★ Child: 'Mermaid swimming.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Mermaid swimming in water.'

Section 6

Not for distribution

Section 6

Not for distribution

Section 6.1

Understanding and using pronouns: 'he' and 'she'



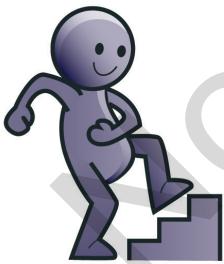
Why is this important?

Pronouns are words that replace a noun or a person (e.g. the boy – 'he'; the girl – 'she'). Other pronouns include 'I', 'you' and 'they'.

What to do

- Find two character toys – one must be a girl (e.g. Barbie) and the other a boy (e.g. Buzz Lightyear, Spiderman).
- Gather together several everyday items (e.g. brush, cup, spoon, flannel).
- Demonstrate that the toys can do lots of different things (e.g. brush hair, wash face). Say:
 - ★ 'He's washing.'
 - ★ 'She's jumping.'
- Can the child choose the correct character to relate to the pronoun?
- Share books and use pronouns to talk about what's happening (e.g. 'he's running', 'she's skipping').
- Talk about what children are doing in the park when you are out for a walk, or on the bus. Use a lead-in phrase to help the child relate the pronoun to the male/female, e.g.
 - ★ 'Look at that boy, *he's* hopping.'
 - ★ 'Can you see that lady? *She's* eating.'

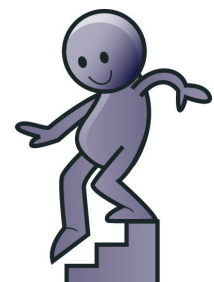
Step up



- Make the toys perform actions: the child can tell you what they are doing.
- Use action pictures showing men, women, girls and boys.
- Read simple fairy tales where a boy and a girl are involved (e.g. Hansel and Gretel) and emphasise the 'he' and 'she'. Can the child fill in the correct pronoun if you pause and point to the boy or girl?
- Play with puppets to encourage 'he/she' in a play sequence.

Step down

- Use one toy to begin with and perform instructions using 'he' then introduce the girl and work only on 'she' before trying them both together.
- Try working with two other familiar children – a boy and a girl: 'Let's ask Harry to jump. What's Harry doing? He's jumping', etc.
- Use prompt cards for 'he' and 'she' – these could be written words or symbols.



Section 6.2

Understanding 'behind' and 'in front'



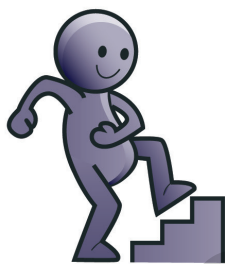
Why is this important?

'Behind' and 'in front' are prepositions and are used to describe the placement of objects or people.

What to do

- Gather together a few favourite character toys.
- Explain that the toys are going to play a game and the child is going to put them in different places. Ask the child to:
 - ★ 'Put Spiderman *behind* the curtain.'
 - ★ 'Put Barbie *in front* of the chair.'
 - ★ 'Put teddy *in front* of the fridge.'
- You can use things around the room or work with items on the table (e.g. cup, car, book). Ask the child to put Spiderman 'behind' the cup.

N.B. remember to sit next to child for this activity so that you are both looking at things from the same perspective.

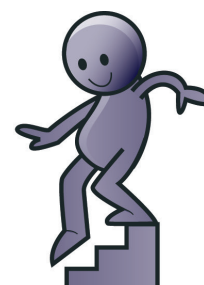


Step up

- Vary the prepositions and include ones tackled earlier (e.g. 'in', 'on', 'under').
- Introduce other prepositions (e.g. 'next to', 'between').
- Vary the toys used. You could play with the farm or the garage, for example, as you look for lots of opportunities to include a range of prepositions.
- Use the prepositions to describe and comment, and encourage the child to join in and use them too.
- Play a 'hide and seek' game – with real people hiding and describing their location (e.g. 'under' the table). Or use toys to play pretend 'hide and seek' – miniatures can also hide in the doll's house!

Step down

- Use gestures/signs.
- Exaggerate your intonation to highlight the sound differences of the two words.
- Start by just teaching 'behind' so everything is put 'behind' objects.
- Encourage the child to go with you and stand behind something together.
- When out-and-about, show objects that are behind things (e.g. 'the bin's behind the tree', 'the car's behind the bus'). When the child has learnt 'behind', work on 'in front' and then work with them both.



Section 6.3

Understanding the negative form



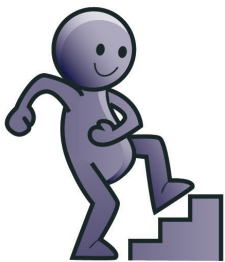
Why is this important?

Children begin to understand negatives with 'no' and 'not' and then progress to understanding the reduced form (e.g. 'isn't', 'can't' and 'don't').

What to do

- Gather together some pictures of children doing various actions (e.g. climbing, running, jumping, eating).
- Put out two pictures and ask:
 - ★ 'Who *isn't* eating?'
- When the child points to the right picture, reinforce this by repeating the sentence:
 - ★ 'Well done. He *isn't* eating. He's climbing.'
- Have another go with two new pictures.

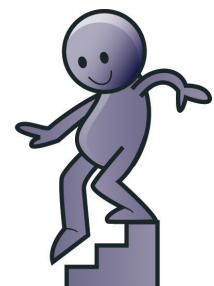
Step up



- Encourage the child to *use* the negative form 'isn't'. Look at action pictures together and try:
 - ★ Adult: 'Who's eating?'
 - ★ Child points to the correct picture.
 - ★ Adult: 'That's right, he's *eating*. Is he *crying*?'
 - ★ Child: 'No.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Well done. He ...'
- (pause for child to finish sentence).
- ★ Child: '... isn't crying.'
- The child may use 'not' to begin with, which is fine: model the use of 'isn't' as frequently as possible throughout the day.
- Use action words that are similar (e.g. pushing/pulling, eating/drinking).

Step down

- Introduce the pictures first by talking about the action words to make sure that the vocabulary is familiar by asking 'Who's eating/climbing?'
- Replace 'isn't' with 'not' to begin with (e.g. 'Who's *not* climbing?')
- Use a sign/gesture for the negative or shake your head to give a non-verbal cue for the negative form. You can also use an exaggerated hand gesture for 'no'.
- Use action words that are very different (e.g. sleeping vs. jumping rather than drinking vs. eating).
- Use toys to demonstrate who isn't doing something (e.g. when the child is playing in the home corner, ask the child 'Who's sleeping?'/ 'Who isn't sleeping?').



Section 6.4

Understanding functions of body parts



Why is this important?

Understanding the functions of body parts follows on from understanding the functions of objects. It allows children to reflect on their own behaviour and essentially on what they need to do (e.g. 'listen' involves using our ears and 'look' using our eyes).

What to do

- Draw a picture of the child (or encourage the child to do this).
- Suggest body parts that need to be added (e.g. hands, legs, ears).
- When the child has finished, ask questions relating to the functions of the various body parts, e.g.
 - ★ 'What can we do with our hands?'
 - Clap, wave, hold things.
 - ★ 'What do we do with our ears?'
 - Listen, hear, wear earrings.
- Find pictures of people performing the different actions and make a scrapbook (e.g. put a picture of hands in the middle of a piece of paper and draw/cut out/print out pictures of people waving, holding knife and fork, throwing a ball).

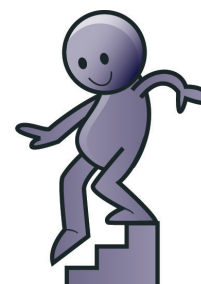


Step up

- Introduce more difficult actions (e.g. tip-toeing).
- Include other, less obvious parts of the body (e.g. brain). What functions do these have?
- Talk about animals and their different body parts (e.g. birds – beaks, claws; giraffe – four legs, long neck). What functions do these parts have?

Step down

- Start with actions for the easier body parts (e.g. hands and feet rather than nose or fingers).
- During everyday activities refer to what the child is using to do a particular task (e.g. clapping hands, using a foot to kick a ball).
- Use signs/gestures alongside the words.



Section 6.5

Playing sociably and learning to share

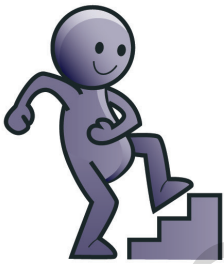


Why is this important?

Social play takes place in a natural environment, allowing children to develop and practise their communication skills. To be successful, children need to understand the rules of turn-taking and sharing. This forms the foundation of social-interaction skills for later life.

What to do

- Provide opportunities for the child to engage in play activities with other children of similar ages by involving the child in playgroups, nursery school, parent and toddler groups and visiting places where other children play (e.g. the park).
- Set up activities where two children can play together (e.g. home corner, playing shops, a simple game, taking turns to complete a puzzle).
- Suggest things that one child could give to another (e.g. one child cooking, the other putting the doll to bed; suggest child one heats a bottle of milk for child two to give to doll).

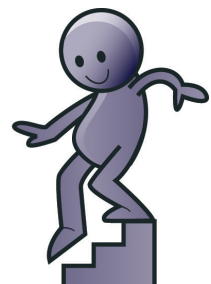


Step up

- Reduce the involvement of an adult (e.g. encourage the children to play cooperatively together while you do something else).
- Act out simple stories together with a few children where each child's role depends on another.
- Consider a more ambitious project (e.g. making cards, cookery).
- Demonstrate what sharing means using puppets: talk about what it *means* to take turns and share.

Step down

- Play with the child as another child would, so that you can introduce the ideas of sharing and taking turns.
- Practise asking for objects/toys, etc. rather than 'just taking them'.
- If two children want the same toy, set a timer so one child has it for two minutes, then passes the toy to the other child.
- Use reward stickers and verbal praise as tangible rewards for good sharing/turn-taking/cooperative play, etc.



Section 6.6

Developing expressive language



Why is this important?

As language develops, children need to be able to use more words to make longer sentences. This happens by adding grammatical elements (i.e. plurals, past tense) or by linking two thoughts (e.g. using 'and'/'because') thereby making sentences much longer. Children are ready for this when they have the vocabulary to be able to link three key words in a sentence.

What to do

- Gather together two favourite toys (e.g. doll and teddy). You will need a picture to represent them as well (e.g. draw a picture/take a photo/cut out a picture of a teddy and doll).
- Draw/print out/cut out a picture of someone sitting, standing, running and sleeping.
- Now draw/print out/cut out some pictures of a few common items in the room (e.g. chair, television, table, drawers).
- Put the pictures in three piles and encourage the child to take one picture from each pile to make a sentence:
 - ★ 'Teddy sitting chair.'
- Encourage the child to say the sentence and then make teddy/doll perform the action.
- Keep one or two words the same (e.g. teddy sitting bed, teddy sitting sofa).

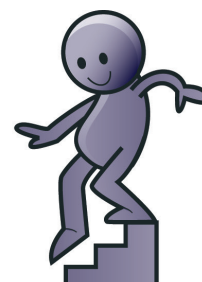
Step up



- Encourage the child to fill in the grammatical elements (e.g. 'Teddy *is* sitting *on the* television').
- Add a fourth pile to represent someone on/under an object. Can the child use a four-word sentence (e.g. 'doll sleeping under table') and carry out the sentence?
- Can the child put together two sentences using the picture piles and then tell you both, linking with 'and'?
 - ★ 'Teddy sitting (on the) bed *and* doll's standing (on the) chair.'

Step down

- Start with one toy so teddy performs all the actions and vary the other two piles so the child needs to say two words and then build up to three.



Section 6.7

Understanding and using verbs in the past tense



Why is this important?

Developing the grammatical structures relating to past tense allows children to talk about an event that has happened in the past and contrast this with the here and now. This increases the range of language use and also allows children to talk about things outside the here and now.

What to do

- To elicit past tense, try:
 - ★ After playtime/lunchtime, ask the child who he/she played with and what he/she ate, etc.
 - ★ When playing with toys (e.g. in home corner or with the farm), ask what food the child made for dinner or what the farmer fed the cows, etc.
 - ★ Tell a simple story (e.g. Oxford Reading Tree* Stage 1 and 2) and ask the child to use the pictures to retell the story using the past tense.
- ★ Play 'Simon Says'. When the child has performed the action, ask:
 - Adult: 'What did you do?'
 - Child: 'Jumped/danced/hopped', etc.
- ★ Use everyday situations to elicit past tense forms (e.g. a train goes past, a child falls over). Ask 'What happened?'

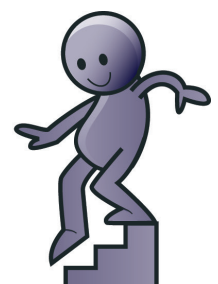


Step up

- Leave a longer gap between an event and asking what happened – this makes the task harder as the child has to concentrate on memory, vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to relay the information.
 - ★ This could be an event from earlier in the day, last week or a memorable occasion like a birthday or a holiday.
- Introduce irregular past tense verbs (e.g. caught, bought, gave) and use these often in everyday routines/while sharing books.

Step down

- Use pictures of what the child has been doing to act as visual prompts – this allows the child to concentrate on the past tense rather than what to say.
- Take photographs and use these for discussion.
- Model and repeat the correct grammatical forms for the child to hear.
- Try to use regular past tense forms (e.g. jumped, painted, clapped).



*The Oxford Reading Tree is available from Oxford University Press (www.oup.com).

Section 6.8

Generating ideas about the function of objects (semantic links)

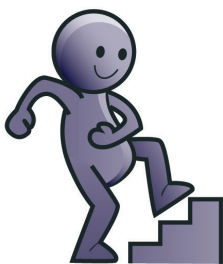


Why is this important?

Children need to learn that objects often have more than one function (e.g. ball – throw it, catch it, play football) and that lots of objects perform the same actions (e.g. what flies – butterfly, helicopter, bird, aeroplane).

What to do

- Gather together pictures of objects and put them face down on the table. The child chooses a picture (e.g. chair):
 - ★ Adult: 'What do we do with a chair?'
 - ★ Child: 'Sit on it.'
- Give the child praise and then talk about other objects and their uses.

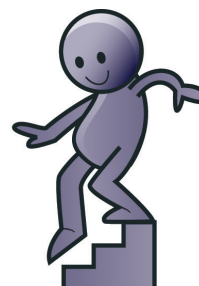


Step up

- Build up to more unusual or complex vocabulary.
- Take it in turns to list everything you could read, sit on, smell, etc. without using any picture prompts.

Step down

- Use familiar vocabulary and items from everyday routines.
- If the child is unsure of an item, try to demonstrate its use in several situations.
- Match items that belong within the same function category (e.g. things to wear – socks, trousers, t-shirt; things to eat with – fork, spoon, chopsticks).



Section 6.9

Understanding 'why' questions



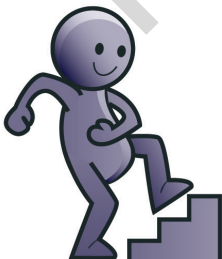
Why is this important?

'Why' questions help to develop causal relations, that is, something happened because of something else (e.g. the boy's feet are cold because he has no socks). The development of verbal reasoning in this way is very important and is a key stage in language development. It helps children move from the concrete to the more abstract use of language and also to reflect on the world around them.

What to do

- Look at picture books and/or read simple stories together.
- When you have finished, look through the book again and see if the child can tell you something about the pictures or what happened.
- Ask simple 'why' questions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why was the little boy crying?'
 - 'He fell in the mud.'
 - ★ 'Why did they have to go home?'
 - 'It was raining.'
 - ★ 'Why was the dog barking?'
 - 'The cat was stuck in the tree.'
- The child doesn't need to respond with 'because ...' as long as he/she understands that the question is looking for a reason. However, for some, eliciting 'because' helps to unlock the rest of the sentence.

N.B. Try not to ask too many questions but allow the child to lead some of the discussion about the story.

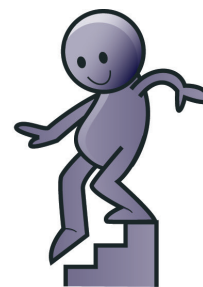


Step up

- Ask questions about emotions (e.g. why people are feeling happy/sad/angry) or questions that require more complex answers.
- Begin to introduce responding to the 'why' question with 'because ...'.

Step down

- If the child doesn't answer the question or answers inappropriately try:
 - ★ Giving a choice (e.g. 'Is the little boy crying because he wanted a banana or because he fell in the mud?').
 - ★ Starting to answer the question and then pause to see if the child can finish the sentence (e.g. 'They had to go home because it was rrrr ...').
 - ★ Repeating back the question: if the child has responded correctly using one of the options above (choices or finishing the sentence), repeat the question and see if it can be answered independently.
- Use gestures or a written word visual support for 'because'.
- Try asking the question and then answering it yourself:
 - ★ 'I wonder why the boy is running? Because he's going to meet Daddy.'



Section 6.10

Learning to remember and then say the names of three things

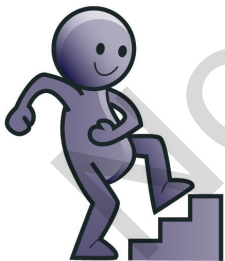


Why is this important?

Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. If, for example, a three-word instruction is given (e.g. 'Wash doll's face'), the child has to remember 'wash', 'doll' *and* 'face'. If he/she can't do this, it may be that auditory memory is not yet sufficiently developed.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of pictures of everyday things. These could be cards or cut out from magazines.
- Place a few cards (i.e. four) face-down on the table.
- Choose three cards but don't show them to the child.
- Look at the cards and say what they are (e.g. 'I've got a hat, a cup and a pencil'). Ask:
 - ★ 'Can you remember what cards I've got?'
- If the child is right, show your cards and reinforce:
 - ★ 'Well done! A hat, a cup *and* a pencil!'
- If the child finds it difficult or remembers only one or two items, repeat what cards you have, emphasising the key words (e.g. 'I've got *hat, cup and pencil*').
- Try the activity with some action pictures (e.g. 'doll is sitting', 'boy jumping bed'). Can the child copy these three-word phrases?

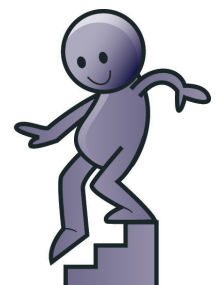


Step up

- Work towards choosing four or more cards.
- Choose different vocabulary (e.g. action words, not just the names of things).

Step down

- Start by turning over one and then two cards. Can the child remember the items?
- Allow the child to see the pictures first.
- Prompt by saying the first sound or by giving a clue (e.g. 'it begins with "d"', 'it's an animal', it says "woof").
- Use items within the same semantic category (e.g. all food, all animals), rather than mixed up items.
- Keep the order the same – left to right – to help the child use the sequence to remember the items.



Other things to try: 6a

Attending to an adult-led activity for longer (encouraging attention and listening)



Why is this important?

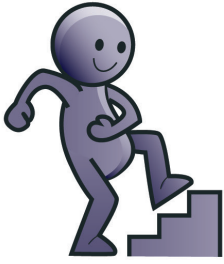
Developing children's attention and listening skills is particularly important for success in school. These are learned skills and need to be actively encouraged and practised.

What to do

- Collect an inset puzzle and put all the pieces into a bag.
- Show the child how many pieces there are.
- Encourage the child to delve into the bag to retrieve the pieces one at a time to complete the puzzle.
- Vary the length of time the child needs to concentrate on the task by either increasing or reducing the number of puzzle pieces in the bag.

Alternative themes

- Give the child some small pictures to colour in or decorate. Vary the number of pictures the child needs to complete before finishing, or how much time will be spent on the activity.
- Tell a story, making it longer or shorter depending on how long the child is able to sit and listen. Involve the child in the story as much as possible (e.g. acting out, holding props) to maintain attention.
- Put the pieces for a lotto game in a bag. Give the child one board and you have the other. Take it in turns to take a piece out of the bag and match it to the board. If it doesn't match put it back.

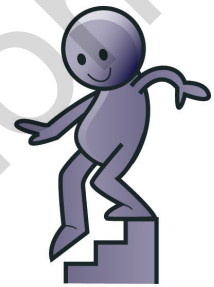


Step up

- Increase the time spent on the activity-building concentration.
- Link two activities (e.g. build the tower *and* complete the puzzle).
- Increase the range of external distractions (e.g. a noisy environment, other children at the table).

Step down

- Keep the activities short – even a few seconds – and build up.
- Use a visual cue so the child knows when the activity will end. For example, place a Velcro strip on a piece of card and stick card circles to the Velcro to represent the number of turns the child is expected to make. As the child takes a turn with the activity, help him/her take the circles off the Velcro until they are all gone, signalling the end of the activity.
- Try using a visual cue like an egg timer: the game stops when the sand has all run through.
- Use rewards to motivate the child to finish. For example, at the end of your visual cue (see above), put a picture of a small reward (e.g. a sticker or five minutes with a favourite toy/game).



Other things to try: 6b

Remembering three and then four items



Why is this important?

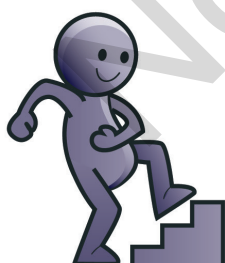
Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. If, for example, a three-word instruction is given (e.g. 'wash doll's face'), the child has to remember 'wash', 'doll' *and* 'face'. If he/she can't do this, it may be that auditory memory is not yet sufficiently developed.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of five–six familiar everyday items.
- Give the child a small bag/basket.
- Put the objects on the floor or on a table.
- Ask the child to put three things into the shopping bag at a time.
- Don't let the child pick up the items until you've finished giving the instruction. Gently hold the child's hands until you've finished talking if necessary.
- Make sure the vocabulary is familiar.

Alternative theme

- Try changing the theme of the game to maintain interest or to fit in with the curriculum (e.g. shopping at the supermarket, clothes shop, jewellers, pet shop or shoe shop). You could also try packing for holidays (e.g. to a cold or hot destination) or for a picnic.



Step up

- Ask the child for more items.
- Have a wide range of items from different semantic fields.
- Increase the selection to choose from.
- Put the items a little distance away: the child has to remember the list for longer.
- Ask for the objects in a different order from how they are laid out on the table/floor.

- Try putting the items in a different room – this increases the ‘load’ as the child has to remember for longer and can’t actually see the items as you say the list.
- During everyday routines, ask the child to help bring things from elsewhere in the house.
- Weave in a time delay of increasing length.

Step down

- Reduce the number of items you are asking for – even to the three you are aiming for.
- Use a smaller number of items to choose from.
- Put the things within easy reach.
- Start the game as a matching activity (e.g. by giving the child a picture shopping list of the items they need to collect).
- Encourage the child to repeat back the things to collect (i.e. use verbal rehearsal).
- Ensure the items are from the same semantic group.



Other things to try: 6c

Understanding and using 'where', 'who' and 'what' questions

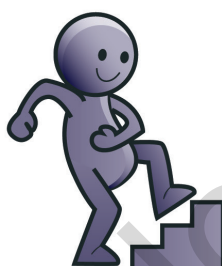


Why is this important?

Wh- questions are an integral part of everyday conversations and routines. Children need to understand these structures to be able to respond appropriately. Children must learn to ask questions to become active learners and to take responsibility in their own learning.

What to do

- This activity helps children to understand and discriminate between different question forms through familiar and repetitive songs like 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm'.
- Sing the song together.
- After each verse ask:
 - ★ 'Who's in the song?'
 - ★ 'Where are they?'
 - ★ 'What animals are there?'
 - ★ 'What noise did the animal make?'



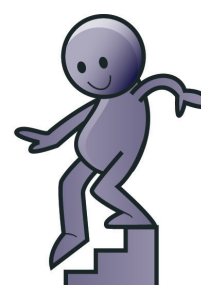
Step up

- Use more difficult animals (e.g. geese). To begin with, you may need to support the new vocabulary with pictures.
- Try personalising the owner of the farm – use someone in the group (e.g. 'Billy Smith had a farm ...').
- Similarly, substitute the 'where' part (e.g. 'Old MacDonald had a zoo/garden/garage').
- Enjoy other nursery rhymes that lend themselves to 'wh-' questions:

★ 'Humpty Dumpty'	★ 'I am the Music Man'
★ 'Jack and Jill'	★ 'Incy Wincy Spider'

Step down

- Use signs/symbols/written words to help understanding of the question words.
- Use pictures of the animals.



Not for distribution

Section 7

Not for distribution

Section 7

Not for distribution

Section 7.1

Role play



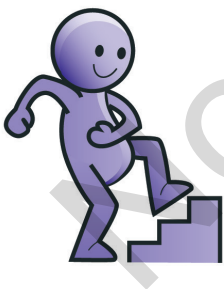
Why is this important?

Role play is how children learn to ‘act out’ situations or events that are not in the present. They use knowledge of their own experiences to pretend to be someone else (e.g. nurse, mummy, teacher, bus or train driver, shopkeeper) and also act the part of roles from books, television programmes, etc.

What to do

- Gather together some clothes for dressing up. Hats, gloves, bags and other accessories are especially useful.
- Encourage the child to dress up and pretend to be someone different (e.g. nurse, doctor, vet, policeman, teacher, spaceman, cowboy, train driver, or perhaps an animal).
- Help the child get into the game by looking at books that have a story, or pictures about a particular character.
- Make the pretend environment together (e.g. in the shop, use empty packets and boxes and pretend money, purses and bags; make food items from play-dough or draw and cut them out).
- Useful books might be about familiar fairy stories or those that relate to real-life experiences (e.g. shopping, a trip to a café, the dentist).

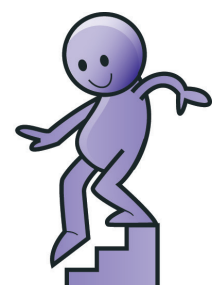
Step up



- Use an increasing variety of familiar environments and routines: the theme corner is an excellent resource.
- Read a story and encourage the child to act it out with friends, or using toys.
- Use puppets to act out different ideas.
- Make a more unusual environment together (e.g. a station, campsite, library, hairdresser or doctor’s surgery).

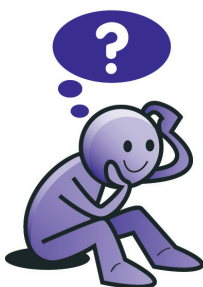
Step down

- You may need to take the lead by making suggestions and encourage the child to join in.
- Invite an older friend or relative to play to ‘show’ the child some ideas.



Section 7.2

Understanding 'many' and 'few'

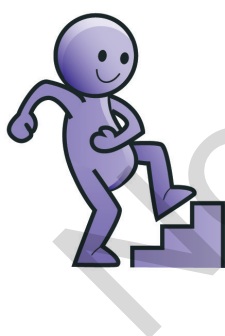


Why is this important?

These kinds of concepts can be tricky to learn, because there is no fixed quantity associated with them (e.g. a 'few' leaves on a tree may relate to a hundred leaves, whereas a 'few' biscuits left on a plate may only be three). These concepts/words are abstract – they can't be seen or touched in the same way as a concrete object like a fork can.

What to do

- Draw a scene on a big piece of paper or photocopy one out of a book (e.g. a playground/park/classroom/street/room of house).
- Think of things that belong in the scene (e.g. if your scene is the park, you might include trees, ducks, swings, flowers, children, bikes).
- Create cards to depict 'many' and 'few' of each of the objects (e.g. 'many' trees on one piece of card and a 'few' trees on another).
- Put out the scene with the two matching objects and ask the child to:
 - ★ 'Put many trees in the park.'
- Can the child choose the correct picture and place it on the big picture?
- Continue presenting extra cards as you would in a matching game, putting 'many' with 'many' and 'few' with 'few'. N.B. You could use Blu-Tack to stick the smaller pictures on.
- Do the same for the other pairs of objects (e.g. 'many'/'few' ducks).

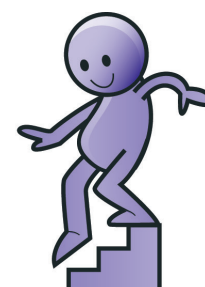


Step up

- Encourage the child to begin to use the concepts to describe objects in the environment.
- Reverse the roles in the above activity so the child is telling you which objects to place in the scene.
- Sort pictures of 'many'/'few' where the child generates the concepts for himself/herself.

Step down

- Start by introducing all the objects with 'many' (e.g. 'many' ducks, 'many' trees). Ask the child to find 'many' ducks.
- Collect together objects in the home and sort them into groups of 'many' and 'few' (e.g. 'many' pencils, 'few' spoons).
- Linking the word 'many' to other concepts that the child knows may help (e.g. 'more', 'lots', 'most').
- Talk about 'many' and 'few' during everyday routines (e.g. 'many' peas/beans on the child's plate but a 'few' fish fingers).
- Match pictures of 'many' and 'few'.



Section 7.3

Understanding 'long' and 'short'

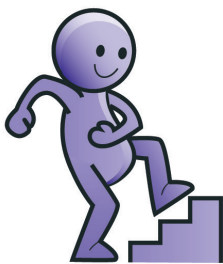


Why is this important?

Concepts such as 'long'/'short' and 'big'/'little' are used to describe what something looks like and how things are different from each other (e.g. a pencil could be 'long'/'short'/'fat'/'thin'/'big'/'little').

What to do

- Gather together pairs of things that can be described as 'long' and 'short' (e.g. pencils, dolls with 'long' and 'short' hair, rulers, trousers, scarves, snakes).
- Put out one of the pairs (e.g. the 'long' and the 'short' pencil).
- Ask the child to find the 'long' pencil, etc.
- The child could post the object in a box or put it in a bag.

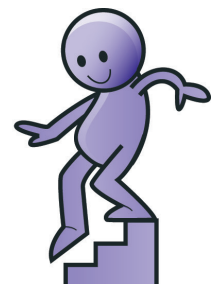


Step up

- Encourage the child to choose from two (or more) sets of objects (e.g. 'long'/'short' snakes and 'long'/'short' scarves).
- Reduce the use of gestures/signs.
- Encourage the child to tell you whether an item is 'long' or 'short'.
- Draw pictures of objects and encourage the child to colour in the one you say (e.g. 'Colour in the "long" neck').
- Draw some people without any hair. Ask the child to draw 'long' or 'short' hair.
- Ask the child to sort items identifying the category name for himself/herself.

Step down

- If the child finds the concepts difficult to grasp, start by talking about all the 'long' things first. Draw 'long' snakes, children with 'long' hair, 'long' scarves, etc.
- Stretch the word 'long' (intonation helps)!
- When the child understands the concept 'long', move on to 'short' and work in the same way.
- Use a corresponding gesture or sign when using the words 'long' and 'short'.
- Only use one pair of objects at a time.
- Match items once you have started the game.
- Start with one concept first (e.g. 'long' and then 'not long') before adding the word 'short'.



Section 7.4

Learning the meaning of 'why'



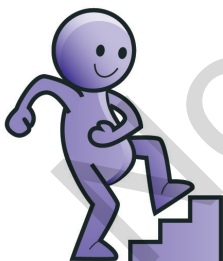
Why is this important?

'Why' questions help to develop causal relations, which is when something happened because of something else (e.g. the boy is crying because he fell off his bike). As verbal reasoning skills develop, children learn that 'why' questions can probe increasingly more abstract concepts.

What to do

- Collect some simple action pictures that illustrate 'cause and effect' activities.
- Use 'why' as you ask the child about the pictures, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why has the man got his umbrella?'
 - 'Because it's raining.'
 - ★ 'Why is the girl running?'
 - 'Because she's trying to catch the bus.'
 - ★ 'Why can't the boy reach the cake?'
 - 'Because he's too small.'
 - ★ Include questions here about feelings/emotions that the child can relate to his/her own experience (e.g. 'Why can't the boy reach the cake? Because he's too small. How does he feel?').
- Encourage sentence completion (e.g. 'Why has the man got his umbrella? Because ...').
- If this doesn't do the trick, model the right response.

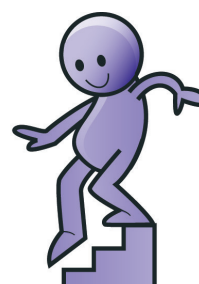
Step up



- Don't use any additional signs/symbols/written word prompts.
- Choose more challenging pictures.
- Read a story together and ask 'why' questions relating to the story.
- Ask simple 'why' questions about the child's daily routine, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why do we wash/brush our hair?'
 - ★ 'Why do we go to school?'
- Doing this throughout the day will aid generalisation.

Step down

- Use a sign or gesture as you say 'why'.
- Use a written word or symbol as well as the sign. Point to the symbol/word as you ask the question.
- Model the correct response and ask the child to repeat.
- Act out the cause and effect using toys or even yourself!



Section 7.5

Understanding 'first' and 'last'

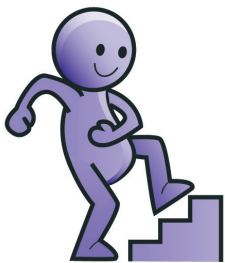


Why is this important?

'First' and 'last' are concepts of time: they refer to something happening before or after something else. They are also significant 'order' concepts when creating sequence in numeracy.

What to do

- It is useful to do this activity with a group of children of mixed ability, so that children who have already acquired these concepts can act as models for those who are still learning.
- Get the group to line up, then ask the child to stand 'first' or 'last' in the line.
- If the child is unsure, show him/her where to stand.
- Once you have given the instruction and the child has moved to the right place in the line, reinforce this by saying where the child is (e.g. 'Yes, now you are first').

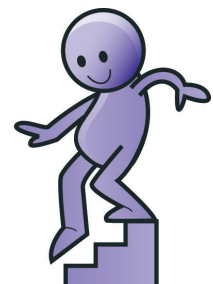


Step up

- Reduce the number of cues.
- Use toys, puppets and pictures (e.g. animals going into a field, people lining up at the checkout or a bus stop).
- With any of these activities, you can encourage the child to use the words 'first' and 'last' by asking 'Where's Jody in the queue?' or 'Where's the horse?' as the animals enter the field, etc.
- Link to time (e.g. 'What happened first in the story?' 'What happened last?').

Step down

- Use visual cues (e.g. signing or pointing to where you want the child to stand as you give the instruction, or have a picture of the line you want).
- Use a small number of children so that the child can focus on understanding 'first'/'last' without having to spend a lot of time working out which child he/she is supposed to be standing by.
- Work on one concept only to begin with (e.g. 'first'). When this is established, introduce 'last'.
- Link the idea of 'last' to 'not first'. This is how children initially learn opposites.



Section 7.6

Understanding and using four-word sentences



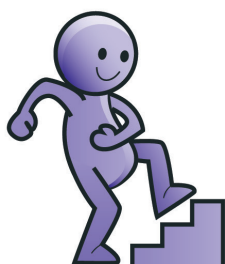
Why is this important?

As language develops, children need to understand increasingly more complex instructions and use longer sentences to describe and explain. This helps expand vocabulary and link words together using 'a' and 'the' as sentences become more like the mature adult form.

A: Naughty toys

What to do

- Ask the child to find two favourite toys (e.g. Spiderman and Batman, Fifi and Dora).
- Find a toy table and chair (or use a real one if necessary).
- Explain that the toys are being naughty by hiding all over the place. Tell the child where to put them – try to make this as fun and outrageous as you can!
- The child will need to understand four different parts of the sentence to get the instruction correct:
 - ★ Person (Spiderman or Batman)
 - ★ Action ('jump'/'sit'/'stand'/'lie')
 - ★ Preposition ('on'/'under')
 - ★ Place ('table'/'chair')
- Ask the child to:
 - ★ 'Make Fifi sit under the chair.'
 - ★ 'Make Batman jump on the table.'
 - ★ 'Make Dora lie under the table.'
- If a child gets part of the instruction wrong, repeat the instruction emphasising the key words where the correction needs to be made (e.g. if the child places the toy 'on' the table instead of 'under', you would say 'Dora's lying *on* the table. Make Dora lie *under* the table.' If the child doesn't correct the error, move the toy to the right place and then repeat the instruction.
- When the child has put the toy in the right place, ask 'What did you do?' Encourage all four keys words to describe the placement of the toy.

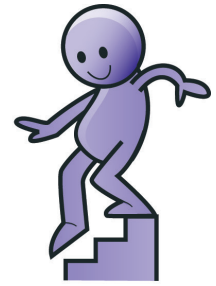


Step up

- One at a time, try:
 - ★ A choice of three toys – Fifi, Dora and Barbie.
 - ★ More prepositions – the toys could go 'on', 'under' or 'behind'.
 - ★ Another place – 'table', 'chair' and 'bed'.
- Encourage the child to use extra words (e.g. 'a' or 'the' to increase the length of the sentence).
- Reverse roles so the child is telling *you* where to put the toys.

Step down

- Slow down your rate of sentence delivery – this often helps processing.
- Reduce the choices so the child is only listening for three key words (e.g. use one toy or one place).
- Start with two action words (e.g. ‘jump’ vs. ‘sit’) and build up to using four words.

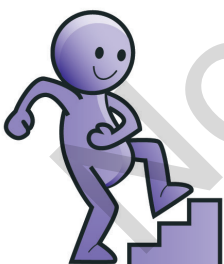


B: Helping Santa (Seasonal activity)

What to do

- Gather together some pairs of ‘big’ and ‘little’ objects (e.g. balls, pencils, teddies, books). Around five sets of items should be enough. Put the pairs of items in front of the child.
- Ask the child to find two of his/her favourite toys (e.g. Bob the Builder and Thomas the Tank Engine).
- Have two sacks (or bags) and two stockings (or socks). Give one sack and one stocking to each toy.
- Explain that the child is going to pretend to help Santa by giving out the presents.
- Give an instruction:
 - ★ ‘Put the *little book* in *Bob’s sack*.’
 - ★ ‘Put the *big ball* in *Bob’s stocking*.’
 - ★ ‘Put the *big pencil* in *Thomas’s sack*’, etc.
- If the child finds it difficult, repeat the sentence emphasising the key words and physically prompting if necessary
- When the toy is correctly placed, ask ‘What did you do?’ Can the child say the four elements (e.g. ‘*big ball (in) Bob’s sack*’)?

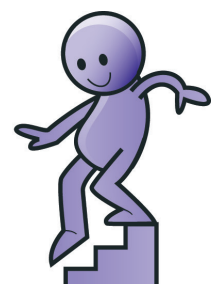
Step up



- Add a third toy that also has a sack and stocking.
- Encourage the child to use the linking words ‘a’, ‘the’ and ‘in’ (e.g. ‘I put *the big ball in Bob’s sack*’).
- Reverse roles so the child tells *you* which toy to put in whose sack/stocking.

Step down

- Take away one of the elements (i.e. start with one size of toy, such as all the big objects *or* one toy) which will reduce the instruction to a three-word level. Then gradually build up to four elements as the child becomes more confident.
- Help understanding by slowing down the rate at which you say the sentence.



Section 7.7

Using comparatives: 'bigger', 'longer' and 'smaller'



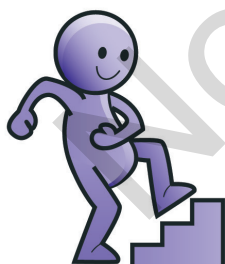
Why is this important?

Comparatives relate to the 'er' on the end of an adjective and are the grammatical form used to express that there is 'more' of something (e.g. 'more big' or 'more small' – although this is not how it is expressed in English). This signals further development of abstract concepts – those where a judgement has to be made.

What to do

- Gather together some items/toys that vary in size (e.g. two sizes of teddy, cups, pencils, books, cars).
- Put out two of the objects (e.g. two sizes of car).
- Point to the 'smaller' of the two objects first and then point to the 'bigger' one saying 'This car is big and this car is ...'
- Encourage the child to use the comparative 'bigger'.
- If the child says 'more big', explain that there is a special way of saying 'more big', e.g.
 - ★ Adult: 'This teddy is big and this teddy is'
 - ★ Child: 'More big.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Yes, more big, this teddy is *bigger*. Now you try. This teddy is'
 - ★ Child: 'Bigger.'

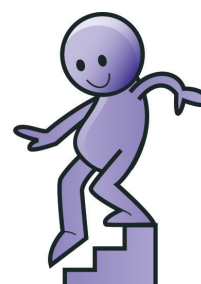
Step up



- Move on to other comparatives (e.g. 'smaller', 'longer', 'taller').
- Find another child who is different in height. Ask the child 'Who is bigger?'
- Line up a few children in height order. Talk about who is 'taller'/'smaller', etc. Use the comparatives in sentences (e.g. 'Jack is taller than Molly').

Step down

- Start by asking the child just to *point* to the item that is bigger.
- Look through books and talk about objects that are bigger (e.g. 'Look this tree is bigger than this one').
- Use gesture to emphasise the meaning.
- Use 'bigger' and 'not bigger' with exaggerated gesture.



Section 7.8

Understanding opposites: 'wet'/'dry'



Why is this important?

Opposites are used to describe concepts (e.g. an oven is 'hot', a fridge is 'cold') whilst recognising that other words (e.g. 'warm', 'tepid', 'lukewarm') represent various positions on the continuum between these two poles. These linguistic concepts are important in developing cognitive skills too.

What to do

- Start by introducing one of the pair of concepts (e.g. 'wet').
- Take a trip round the house, park or school, talking about things that are wet (e.g. washing, rain, puddles, tap, hose, drinks, paint).
- Feel and talk about what 'wet' is like (e.g. wash your hands, jump in puddles, make hand-prints with wet paint).
- Think of 'wet' things with the child and draw them on a piece of paper. Make a collage of 'wet' things by printing/cutting out and sticking pictures.
- When the child is familiar with the word and concept 'wet', move on to learn 'dry', going through the same activities. Once 'wet' and 'dry' have been learnt individually, talk about them together (e.g. put the 'wet' washing on the line and it will 'dry'; wash your hands and then 'dry' them).

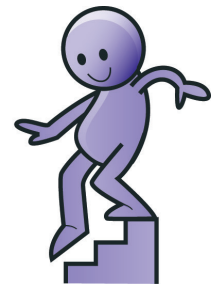


Step up

- Introduce a variety of less familiar concepts (e.g. 'hard'/'soft', 'rough'/'smooth') where a judgement has to be made.
- Think about concepts used in different aspects of the curriculum.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures to help understanding.
- Start with basic concepts that are easy to feel and experience (e.g. 'up'/'down', 'hot'/'cold', 'loud'/'quiet', 'big'/'little').
- Use objects that are the extremes of concepts (e.g. an elephant is always 'big' but a dog can be 'big' or 'little').
- When working on 'wet', begin by talking about things being 'wet' vs. 'not wet'. Remember this is a stage in the development of conceptual vocabulary. Once 'wet' is established, introduce the new concept 'dry'.
- Try to teach concepts that the child will come across in class topics.



Section 7.9

Understanding and using pronouns: 'his' and 'her'

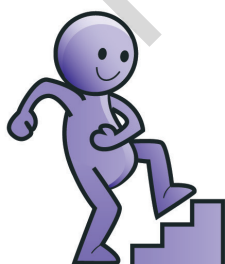


Why is this important?

'His' and 'her' are used to signal that something belongs or relates to a man/lady, boy/girl (or male/female animal) previously identified in a sentence (e.g. the boy wears 'his' shoes, the girl likes 'her' new bike).

What to do

- Find a catalogue or magazine and cut out a picture of a boy and girl – there are also many commercial products available.
- Cut out lots of pictures of clothes and toys. Try to find similar items (e.g. a girl's coat and a boy's coat; a bike for the girl and one for the boy).
- Divide the clothes and toys between the boy and the girl. Ask the child to find:
 - ★ 'His hat.'
 - ★ 'Her shoes.'
 - ★ 'Her bike.'
- If the child chooses the wrong picture:
 - ★ Praise the child: 'Good try.'
 - ★ Repeat the question emphasising the pronoun: 'You've found the girl's bike, that's *her* bike; can you find *his* bike?'
 - ★ If there is no spontaneous correction, guide the child's hand to the right picture repeating the pronoun: 'This is the boy's bike, it's *his* bike.'
- When the child is consistently choosing the right person/picture, reverse the roles so that the child is asking you to find 'his coat', etc.

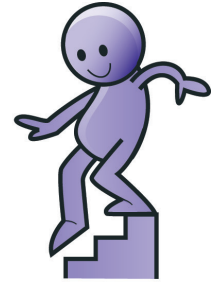


Step up

- Encourage the child to say whether items are 'his' or 'her' things. Use a phrase to guide or give a choice, e.g.
 - ★ 'This is the boy's hat so it's (pause) ... hat.'
 - ★ 'Is this *his* hat or *her* hat?'
- Introduce more difficult pronouns (e.g. 'they'/'their').

Step down

- During everyday routines, emphasise 'his' and 'her'. For example, when getting ready to go out:
 - ★ Adult: 'Well done. James has put *his* coat on; now mummy is putting *her* coat on.'
- There are lots of opportunities at home (e.g. washing 'his'/'her' face during bath-time, putting 'his' socks away whilst sorting out the washing).
- Start by using one of the pictures only (e.g. just the boy) and talk about all 'his' things. When the child has mastered this, move onto just the girl and 'her' things. Then re-introduce both the boy *and* the girl and start again with 'his' and 'her'.
- Use 'his' and 'her' when looking at books (e.g. 'Look, that boy is wearing *his* scarf').



Section 7.10

Linking sentences using 'because'

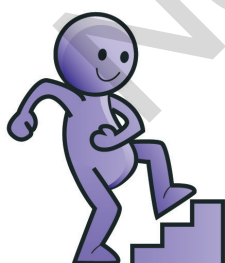


Why is this important?

'Because' is one of a range of words used to expand sentences by adding information, and in this case, justifying ideas/thoughts/decisions. By using words like 'because' (e.g. 'then', 'after', 'that') children are able to expand their grammatical skills too.

What to do

- Gather some things together, show them to the child and then put them in a bag. Ask the child to delve into the bag and guess what he/she can feel. Encourage the child to say why he/she thinks it's the car/cup, etc.
 - ★ 'I think it's a car *because* it's got wheels.'
 - ★ 'I think it's a cup *because* it's got a handle.'
- If the child starts the sentence with 'because', prompt him/her to use the first part by starting it *for* him/her:
 - ★ Child puts hand in bag and knows it's a cup.
 - ★ Child: 'Cup.'
 - ★ Adult pauses to wait for further explanation. No response so asks 'Why do you think it's a cup?'
 - ★ Child: 'Because it's got a handle.'
 - ★ Adult models first part of sentence (e.g. 'I think it's a cup ... [pauses]').
 - ★ Child completes sentence '... a cup because its got a handle.'
- Set up some simple scenes which will work with 'why ... because' structures:
 - ★ 'Why are we running? ... *Because* we want to catch the bus.'
 - ★ 'Why are we putting on coats? ... *Because* it's cold.'

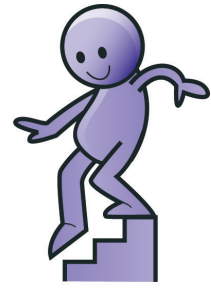


Step up

- Use favourite toys to act out some scenarios.
- Present some 'what's wrong' pictures (e.g. a man with no eyes, a car with no wheels) and ask why questions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why can't the man see?'
 - ★ 'Why can't the car move?'
- Encourage the child to respond using 'because' to link the ideas (e.g. 'The man can't see *because* he's got no eyes').
- Encourage the child to use 'because' to describe things that happened earlier, are going to happen, or occurred in a story.
- Use more abstract concepts to develop thinking skills and justify decision-making.

Step down

- Reduce the items in the bag.
- Take turns to delve into the bag. This gives an opportunity for the child to follow the adult's model. Encourage copying.
- Break the sentence down into two smaller sentences:
 - ★ 'I think it's the sock ... *because* it's soft.'
- Link sentences as part of everyday routines: this will give lots of opportunities to practise similar things (e.g. 'Why are we setting the table? *Because* it's dinner time').



Other things to try: 7a

Talk about things that have happened: 'News Time'

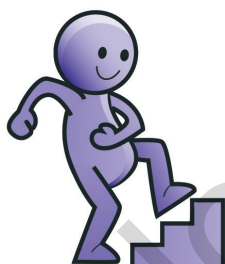


Why is this important?

Sharing news with others is an important skill for children to learn. As news is generally something that has been completed, the past tense is used. This activity encourages use of past tense forms.

What to do

- Sit down with the child somewhere that is quiet (if possible).
- Ask the child to tell you something he/she did over the weekend/school holidays/when they got home from school.
- Make notes of what the child says so you can refer back to them.
- Encourage the child to use past tense verbs when relaying information – do this by 'modelling' back what he/she says using the correct grammatical elements, e.g.
 - ★ Child: 'I goed to the park and play football.'
 - ★ Adult repeats 'Oh, you *went* to the park and *played* football, I bet that was good'.
- Ask questions to guide and prompt the child to give more information.



Step up

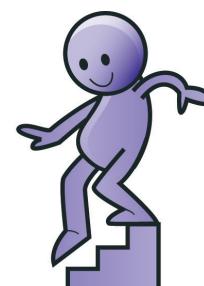
- Encourage the child to recall what he/she has talked about with minimal prompts/fewer pictures, etc.
- Encourage other children to ask a few questions about the child's news.
- Ask for additional information (e.g. 'How did you feel?', 'What was the best thing?').
- Create a scrapbook of family with pictures/photos of where they live, pets, grandparents, favourite toys, etc. to share with other children.

Step down

- Use a home/school book to encourage the parent/s to make a note of a few things that the child has done so the adult can support and increase the successful communication attempts.
- If the child is to feedback his/her news to a group, draw a few pictures to prompt him/her or allow the child to hold the

pictures while the adult says the words.

- Take an object into school from home to represent what the child has done.
- Use photographs or prompt objects, like those brought in for show and tell.



Other things to try: 7b

Understanding pronouns: 'they' and 'their'



Why is this important?

The development of pronouns is important in children's ability to increase the complexity of sentences. It is a further step up the ladder of grammatical understanding and use.

What to do: 'they'

- Gather together three toys (e.g. teddy, Dora and Bob the Builder). Put two toys together and keep the other one separate.
- Gather together some objects (e.g. cup, brush, book, pencil).
- Ask the child to perform some actions, e.g.
 - ★ 'They are jumping.'
 - ★ 'He is writing.'
 - ★ 'They are drinking.'

What to do: 'their'

- Gather together two similar toys – they need to have similar body parts (e.g. not a dog vs. person) and clothed if possible. Alternatively find two pictures of people (a male/female contrast works best) and cut them out.
- Ask the child to find 'their' or 'his/her' body parts/clothes, e.g.
 - ★ 'Find *their* coats.'
 - ★ 'Find *his* hat.'
 - ★ 'Find *their* feet.'
 - ★ 'Find *her* hand.'

N.B. If the child responds correctly, as always give praise. If the child finds it difficult repeat the question, guide the child's hand to select the appropriate toy/s, repeating the pronoun.

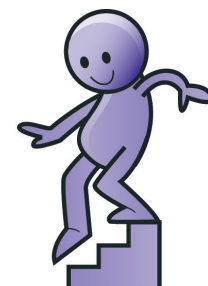


Step up

- Ask the child to find some characters in a book and say what 'they' are doing or talk about 'their' possessions.

Step down

- Look through books talking about what 'they' are doing and about 'their' possessions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Look, those boys are wearing *their* hats.'
 - ★ 'They are playing football.'
- Revise 'he'/'she' and 'his'/'hers'.
- Include some of the 'he'/'she' tasks tackled earlier.



Other things to try: 7c

Playing socially in groups

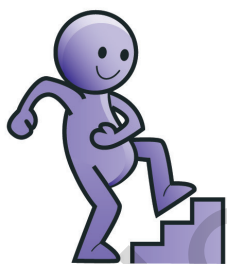


Why is this important?

Playing in groups is important as children can learn new skills from observing other children. It also helps them develop social skills such as turn-taking, eye contact and making friends. This all forms part of social and emotional aspects of learning and it is vital that strong foundations are laid early in this area.

What to do

- Try one of the following activities:
 - ★ A pretend tea-party with each child having a toy.
 - ★ Play shops where one child is the shopkeeper and the others buy food.
 - ★ Chase or playground games (e.g. 'What's the Time, Mr Wolf?', 'Oranges and Lemons' or 'Stuck in the Mud').
 - ★ Ball games (e.g. 'Piggy in the Middle').
 - ★ Dressing up or puppet theatres.
 - ★ 'Hide and Seek'.
 - ★ Race games (e.g. three-legged races, obstacle races, relay races).

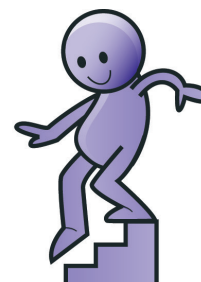


Step up

- Use more children.
- Use games with more rules.
- Use more formal games (e.g. skipping games, board games).

Step down

- Make sure children know what to do. Perhaps play alongside them first and then remove yourself gradually.
- Start with fewer children.
- Use games without rules.
- Structure social play very closely to facilitate interaction in a pair first.



Other things to try: 7d

Understanding 'same' and 'different'

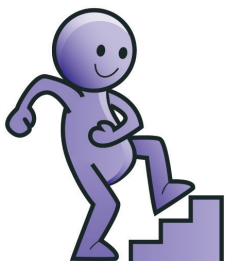


Why is this important?

'Same' and 'different' are concepts used to describe similarities and differences between objects. They are frequently used across the curriculum and are used in the context of numeracy and science in particular.

What to do

- Find pictures of objects in catalogues/magazines that are exactly the 'same' and pictures of things that are 'different', e.g.
 - ★ two identical shoes
 - ★ one cup and one pencil
- Place the two pairs of pictures on the table.
- Ask the child to point to the pictures that are the 'same' or those that are 'different'.
- Real toys/objects can be used if you have got matching items (e.g. two socks vs. one vest; one watch or two spoons vs. one plate and one cup).

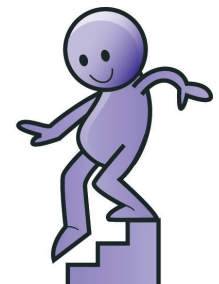


Step up

- Introduce items that are different but only slightly (e.g. a red pencil and a blue pencil, two different-size spoons).
- Encourage the child to tell you whether items are the same or different.
- Reduce the use of signs and gestures so the child is relying solely on verbal understanding.
- Encourage the child to sort items, identifying the properties for himself/herself.

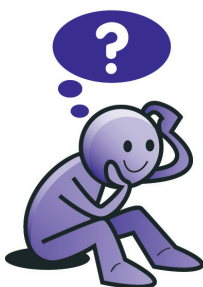
Step down

- Use a corresponding gesture or action for 'same'/'different' to help understanding.
- The child may find it easier to distinguish between 'same' vs. 'not the same' to begin with, rather than 'different'.
- Start with objects from different categories to begin with for the two different items (e.g. pen vs. elephant).
- Start by introducing the concept 'same' to begin with (e.g. matching the washing into the pairs of socks that are the 'same'; talking about two items of food that are the 'same', such as two biscuits; colouring two pictures the 'same').



Other things to try: 7e

Taking turns in a small group

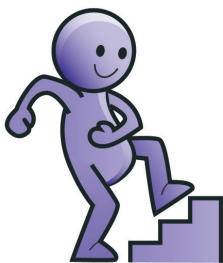


Why is this important?

Communication is a two-way process that involves the participants taking turns to speak and listen. Observation and listening skills are vital in the development of turn-taking. This activity involves practising both these skills.

What to do

- Gather together five children. It is best to have a mixture of children – some who are better at turn-taking as well as some who have difficulties with turn-taking.
- Choose one child to lead the activity and encourage him/her to make a sign, gesture or sound.
- The aim is for the sign, gesture or sound to be passed around the circle and copied by each child in turn until it is back at the beginning.
- Children must wait for the previous child to finish before taking their turn.

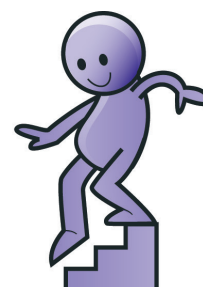


Step up

- Try two signs, gestures or sounds together (e.g. wave hand and say 'ah').
- Reduce the number of clues.
- Increase the number of children.
- Increase the waiting involved.
- Expand the opportunities by playing games such as 'Pop-Up Pirate' or 'Ker-Plunk' where children have to put in or take out a piece when it is their turn.
- Games such as lotto or pairs are also good for turn-taking.
- Make up a short obstacle course. Children take a turn doing each obstacle and return to the start.

Step down

- Use visual prompts to signal when children should take their turn (e.g. use a spinner with the children's faces at different points. Move the pointer to one child at a time to indicate whose turn it should be).
- Physically prompt the child when it's his/her turn (e.g. gently tap him/her on the shoulder) and when he/she needs to wait (e.g. hold his/her hand).



Other things to try: 7f

Listening to stories to understand 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions

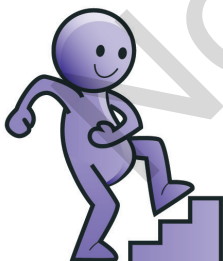


Why is this important?

Questions should be used throughout children's daily routines. Questioning and answering across all situations will develop these skills best. This activity will help children understand and discriminate between the different question words using familiar stories.

What to do

- Read a story (e.g. 'Three Little Pigs', 'Gingerbread Man', 'Cinderella').
- When the story is finished, look back through the book with the child, asking questions relating to the story, e.g.
 - ★ 'What did the first pig build his house from?'
 - ★ 'Where was the Gingerbread Man made?'
 - ★ 'Why did the fox tell the Gingerbread Man to climb on his nose?'
- Use the pictures in the story to help the child remember and prompt with choices if necessary, e.g.
 - ★ 'Was the Gingerbread Man made in the bedroom or the kitchen?'
 - ★ 'Was the first pig's house made of straw or paper?'
- Try not to ask too many questions but include some discussion about the story as well. This will help the child's vocabulary and encourage him/her to think more laterally. It will also give the child an opportunity to voice his/her opinions regarding the story: 'Who did you like? Which bit of the story did you like best?'

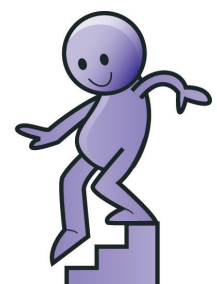


Step up

- Introduce more questions relating to 'when' and 'how' things happened.
- Reduce the number of gestures and choices used to prompt answers. If the child finds this difficult, try to guide him/her to the correct answer by looking at the pictures and recalling the story.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures to help the child understand the key question words.
- Start with shorter stories or shorten traditional stories by only giving the essential information.
- You may need to read the story several times before asking questions.



Section 8

Not for distribution

Section 8

Not for distribution

Section 8.1

Learning the meaning of 'when'

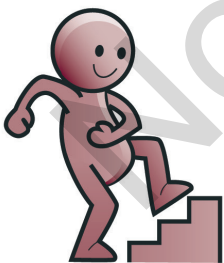


Why is this important?

Wh- questions are an integral part of everyday conversations and routines. Children need to understand these structures to be able to respond appropriately. 'When' is probably the hardest of the question words because time generally can be a challenging concept for children to grasp.

What to do

- Share a simple activity book, experience book or child's reading book.
- Using the story/pictures, ask questions relating to 'when' particular things happen:
 - ★ 'When do we have a bath?'
 - ★ 'When do we put up an umbrella?'
 - ★ 'When do we need a plaster?'
 - ★ 'When do we put the lights on?'
 - ★ 'When does a cat miaow?'
- Encourage appropriate responses. Use sentence completion if the child finds the activity difficult, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: 'When do we put the lights on?'
 - ★ Child: No response.
 - ★ Adult: 'We put the lights on when it's ...' (pause).
 - ★ Child: 'Night time.'

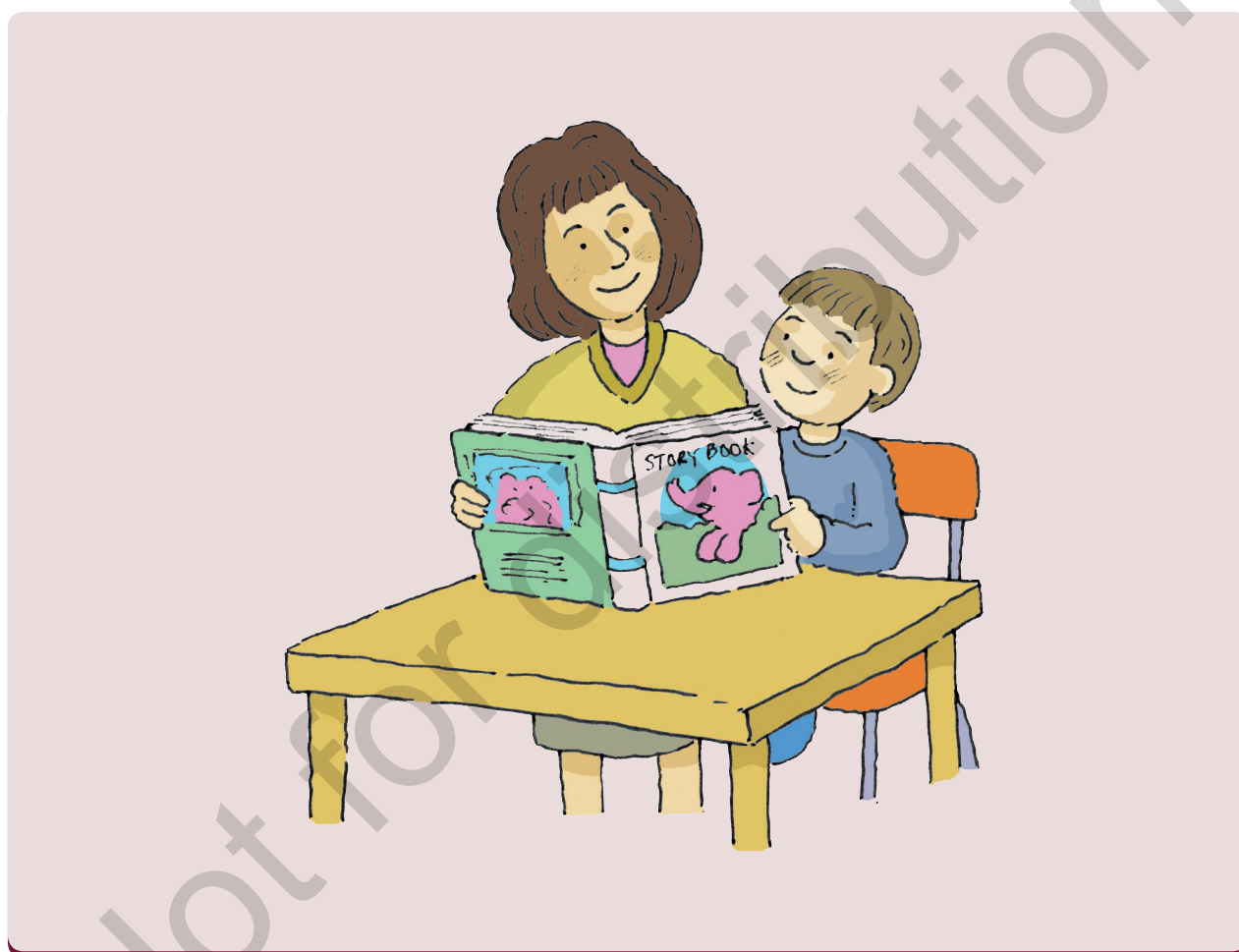
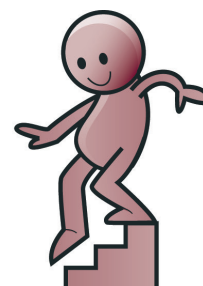


Step up

- Encourage the child to use a fuller sentence to respond to 'when' questions.
- Use an increasing range of question words (e.g. 'what', 'where', 'why', 'when').
- Draw up a timetable of the child's day with pictures for activities that happen throughout the day. Ask: 'When's lunchtime/playtime/assembly?', etc. Encourage responses such as 'after dinner', 'in the morning', 'before'.
- Using 'when' at the appropriate time throughout the day makes it more meaningful.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures, photos/symbols to represent the days of the week or key daily events (e.g. lunchtime).
- Offer choices: 'Do we put the lights on when it's night time or daytime?'
- Use pictures to guide the child to the correct answer (e.g. picture of children going to bed or a night scene out of the window).
- Make a sentence to finish (e.g. 'We go to bed when it's ...?').



Section 8.2

Understanding that things that go together are not always the same

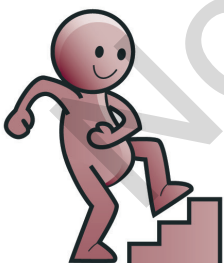


Why is this important?

Children need to learn how words relate to each other but also how they differ from other words (e.g. an apple and carrot are both foods but apples are fruits whereas carrots are vegetables). This helps to build semantics (word meaning) and expands vocabulary.

What to do

- Gather together some pictures of items in a particular category (e.g. food). Use magazines, supermarket promotional leaflets, cut the labels off tins, packets and jars or draw some foods, to get a range of items.
- Using a scrapbook, exercise book or plain paper, think about how the food items could be divided further, e.g.
 - ★ Fruits vs. vegetables.
 - ★ Hot vs. cold foods.
 - ★ Things eaten for breakfast/lunch/dinner/tea.
 - ★ Hard vs. soft foods.
- Choose two groups (e.g. hot vs. cold foods). Stick all the hot foods on one page and the cold foods on another. Talk about the foods together.



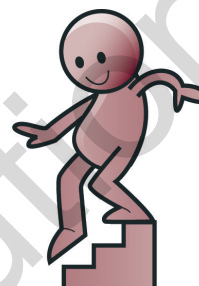
Step up

- Talk about the differences between foods to extend vocabulary (e.g. as together you cut and stick a picture of ice-cream, say that ice-cream is made from milk, is kept in the freezer, is sweet and has different flavours). In this way you are teaching properties.
- Move on to more complex contrasts (e.g. fruits vs. vegetables).
- Some foods (e.g. carrots) can be eaten hot or cold so if the child can cope, include a third category for these foods.

- Other categories to sub-divide include:
 - ★ Clothes – summer/winter; boys/girls; lady/man; work/play; above/below waist; indoor/outdoor.
 - ★ Animals – land/sea; farm/jungle; hot places/cold places; four legged/two legged; walk/swim/fly.
 - ★ Transport – land/sea/fly; wheels/no wheels; fast/slow.

Step down

- Use foods that fall within the child's experience.
- Encourage the child to try different foods, and talk about them as you do so – this will stimulate the ability to remember and recall the vocabulary; it also encourages multi-sensory learning.
- Start with easier contrasts (e.g. hot vs. cold).
- Match items to his/her group – you may have the same item/picture more than once.



Section 8.3

Learning the meaning of 'after'

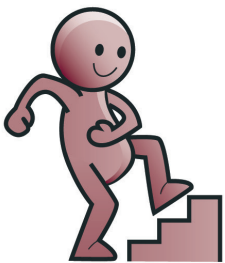


Why is this important?

'After' relates to something happening or occurring later than something else (e.g. put your shoes on after your coat; number ten comes after number nine). This is a key concept when learning ordering and sequencing skills and also in relation to time.

What to do

- Gather together some pictures of children carrying out two different actions (e.g. eating dinner and riding a bike).
- Ask the child to put the activities in order. Link the two pictures (e.g. 'Mimi can ride her bike after she's eaten her dinner').
- Ask what Mimi has to do first. This requires the child to understand that the second part of the instruction has to be performed first.

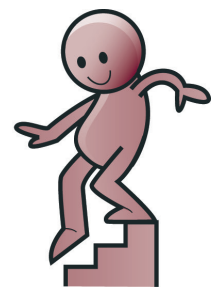


Step up

- Introduce the word 'before' as a contrast.
- Use two pictures to link forwards and backwards:
 - ★ 'Mimi can ride her bike after she's had her dinner.'
 - ★ 'Mimi has to eat her dinner before she can ride her bike.'
- Encourage the child to use 'after' to describe simple sequences.
- Encourage the use of 'before' in the same way.

Step down

- Introduce the word 'after' by putting it at the beginning of the sentence (e.g. 'After Mimi has eaten her dinner, she can ride her bike'). This is easier as the sentences are in the same order as the tasks to be done.
- Use a prompt card or picture/symbol for the word 'after'.
- Try using toys to act out instructions (e.g. 'Teddy can brush his teeth after he's had a drink').
- Line up toys/animals (e.g. 'Put the cow after the pig', 'Which animal is after the sheep?').



Section 8.4

Understanding post-modified sentences



Why is this important?

Understanding these more complex sentences enables children to process more complex instructions by building up their knowledge of the grammatical system and the unspoken rules that govern it. It also helps children to be able to relate back a new piece of information to something they already know.

What to do

- Gather together some toys, e.g.
 - ★ Big and little ducks (or other favourite toys).
 - ★ Some big and little objects (e.g. cup/chair/bed).
- Give the child an instruction:
 - ★ 'The duck sitting on the bed is little.'
 - ★ 'The duck holding the cup is big.'
 - ★ 'The duck standing on the chair is big.'

N.B. You will need 'big' and 'little' objects as well as ducks because the child may process the last part of the sentence as 'the bed is little' rather than 'the duck is little'.

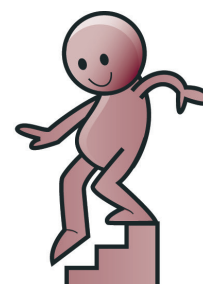


Step up

- Encourage the child to use these sentence types by reversing roles so they tell *you* where to put 'big'/'little' duck.
- Look through books and use post-modified clauses to explain and assess learning (e.g. 'Look, the car winning the race, is red. What can we say about the car that is losing?'). Use pointing to help.

Step down

- Give the child both toys (duck and chair). Give the instruction 'The duck sitting on the chair is little' and give the child the 'little' duck to sit on a chair. If the child can do this, try the next stage below.
- Reduce the number of choices that the child has to make. Only give the child one object (e.g. one size chair) but a choice will still need to be made between 'big'/'little' duck.



Section 8.5

Understanding sentences containing 'either' and 'or'

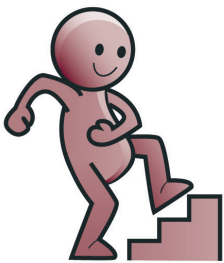


Why is this important?

'Either' and 'or' constructions are an integral part of making choices or decisions/used frequently in everyday situations (e.g. in school, the teacher may say 'You can either play with the sand or the water'; at home, mum may say 'You can either have milk or juice'). The more this can be emphasised in everyday life, the better.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of toys or pictures.
- Ask the child to point to something, e.g.
 - ★ 'Point to *either* teddy *or* monkey.'
 - ★ 'Point to *either* the slide *or* the swing.'
 - ★ 'Give the cup to *either* the girl *or* the boy.'

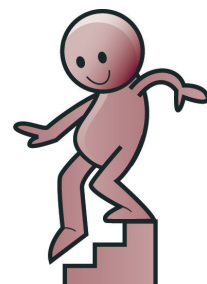


Step up

- Ask the child to describe some pictures using 'either'/'or' (e.g. using a picture of a girl with an apple and a banana to encourage the child to say 'The girl wants either the apple or the banana').
- Take turns to show a choice of two items or pictures using 'either'/'or'.
- Set up specific contexts to practise the structure (e.g. in a shopping game, present two items 'What can the lady choose from?' 'Either ... or ...?') You may have to begin by using 'either' and helping with 'or'.

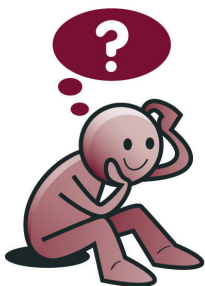
Step down

- Use these instructions during everyday routines as you offer choices (e.g. 'Do you want *either* the apple *or* the banana?', 'Put on *either* your blue coat *or* your red coat').



Section 8.6

Using an increasing range of prepositions: 'behind', 'in front', 'next to' and 'between'

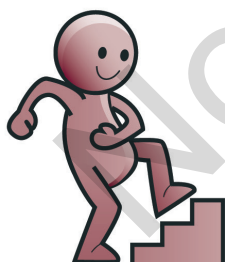


Why is this important?

Prepositions are used to describe the placement of objects or people. They help children describe the world around them.

What to do

- Place several toys around the room – put them 'behind', 'in front', 'next to' and 'between' other things.
- As the child locates a toy, ask:
 - ★ 'Where is monkey?'
- If the child gets it right, reinforce by repeating back straightaway:
 - ★ 'Well done! Monkey is next to the lamp!' and move on to find the next toy.
- If the child doesn't respond or responds incorrectly, offer a choice, e.g.
 - ★ 'Is [the] monkey *under* the cup or *behind* the cup?'
- If the child is still finding the task difficult, model the correct answer, e.g.
 - ★ Adult – 'Where's [the] monkey hiding? He's hiding behind the cup. Where's [the] monkey hiding?'
 - ★ Child – 'Behind.'
 - ★ Adult – 'Well done, behind the cup.'

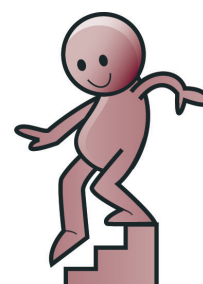


Step up

- Reduce the use of gestural clues.
- Introduce the preposition 'between'.
- Contrast a range of prepositions (e.g. 'in', 'on', 'under').
- Generalise the use of prepositions so that the child is describing the placement of objects throughout everyday activities and routines.
- Increase the length of the sentence from one word to two, three or four.

Step down

- Start with one new preposition at a time (e.g. 'behind').
- Use signs or gestures.
- Make sure the preposition is understood on its own before expecting it to be used.



Section 8.7

Understanding emotions from facial expressions



Why is this important?

Facial expressions are the way we understand how others feel. They communicate essential information to the listener and are a fundamental part of social understanding. Being able to read and describe emotions in others helps in the development of emotional intelligence.

What to do

- Collect together pictures from catalogues/magazines or photographs of faces showing emotions (e.g. a baby crying, a scared child, a happy clown, a surprised lady).
- Put out the pictures and talk about the different emotions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Look, the girl is scared. What could she be scared of? Maybe a big dog or a ride at the fair?'
- Demonstrate a 'scared' face and ask the child to copy.
- Try this for all four emotions – 'happy', 'sad', 'scared', 'surprised'.
- Put out the four pictures and ask the child to point to:
 - ★ 'Who's *surprised*?'
 - ★ 'Who's *happy*?'
- As you share books, talk about how people are feeling and why.

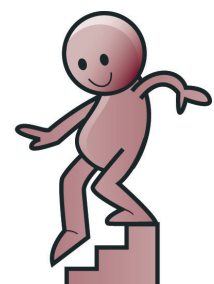


Step up

- Introduce an increasing range of emotions.
- Introduce words that represent similar emotions (e.g. 'frightened' vs. 'scared'; 'cross' vs. 'angry').
- Talk about what might be causes of the increasing variety of more subtle emotions.
- Describe how you think someone in a photo or a book is feeling.
- Begin to infer emotion from the context of a picture (e.g. a party + presents = happy!).

Step down

- Start with only one or two emotions (e.g. 'happy' vs. 'scared') and build up to introduce the others when the child understands two.
- Use exaggerated facial expressions and actions to assist understanding.



Section 8.8

Understanding question words using stories



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to process a variety of question words in a range of different situations. Questions are a way of finding out what children know/can remember about an activity/event, etc. and also a means of encouraging reflection and thinking skills.

What to do

- Read a simple story together. Choose favourite books, about animals perhaps, or favourite characters (e.g. 'Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs').*
- Ask questions about the story (e.g. for 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves', ask:
 - ★ 'Where did the dwarves go to work?'
 - ★ 'What were the dwarves digging for?'
 - ★ 'Why did Snow White go to sleep?'
 - ★ 'Who gave Snow White the poisonous apple?'
- ★ 'How did the dwarves feel when Snow White went to sleep?')
- If the child doesn't answer or answers inappropriately, try:
 - ★ Offering a choice of answers (e.g. 'Where did the dwarves go to work? Was it in a shop or down the mine?').
 - ★ Re-read part of the story where the answer is and then repeat the question.



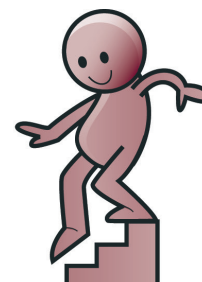
Step up

- Use longer stories with more detailed story-lines.
- Ask questions relating to emotions and facial expressions, and information which has to be inferred from the story rather than read in the text.

Step down

- Make sure the child understands the vocabulary used in the story (e.g. if the child doesn't know what a 'mine' is, then introduce and describe the word showing the pictures that go with the story).
- Use short stories where the answers are very clear from the text. Some of the

Stage 1 'Oxford Reading Tree**' stories have no text so the child can 'read' the story with you and you can ask questions as you go along.



- Use picture books and pop-up books.
- Use one composite picture.

*For more information, go to www.harryandthedinosaurs.co.uk.

**The Oxford Reading Tree is available from Oxford University Press (www.oup.com).

Section 8.9

Learning to remember and then say five things



Why is this important?

Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. If, for example, a four- or five-word instruction is given (e.g. 'Wash doll's face and hands'), the child has to remember 'wash', 'doll', 'face' and 'hands'. Auditory memory is also a factor in being able to process longer instructions.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of pictures showing familiar actions. These could be cards or cut out from magazines.
- Place a few of the cards (e.g. six) face-down on the table.
- Choose a card but don't show it to the child.
- Look at the card and make a sentence about the picture (e.g. card shows 'cat chasing mouse' – you say 'cats like to chase mice').
- Ask the child 'Can you remember what I said?'
- If the child responds correctly, show the card and reinforce by repeating the child's efforts straightaway.
- If it is difficult or only one or two words are recalled (e.g. 'cats chase mice'), repeat the sentence emphasising the missed words (e.g. 'cats *like to* chase mice').
- Take it in turns to copy each other's sentence.

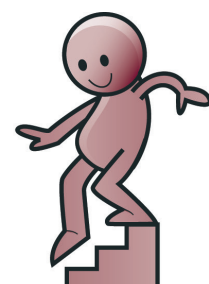


Step up

- Work towards sentences with six words and see if the child can remember these.
- Use longer words, harder vocabulary and different grammatical structures as part of the sentence (e.g. 'He played the triangle beautifully').
- Practise words in sequence.

Step down

- Use visual prompts for the key words (e.g. cat picture/mice picture).
- Start with a shorter phrase and build up to five words (e.g. 'cats like mice').
- Use familiar vocabulary and (grammatical) structures.
- Place a card on the table for each word to show there are five to remember – point to a card in turn as you say a word.



Section 8.10

Using superlatives: 'biggest' and 'tallest'

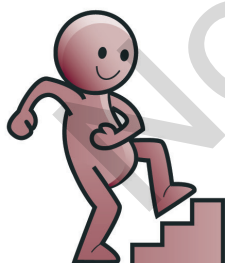


Why is this important?

The superlative is the form of the adjective or adverb that expresses 'most'. The superlative indicates that something has some feature to a 'greater' or 'lesser' degree than anything it is being compared with in a given context (e.g. if shown trains of three different lengths – one will be the longest and one will be the shortest). The grammatical marker 'est' is used most commonly.

What to do

- Gather together groups of objects (e.g. toys that vary in size). You will need at least three of each object – one small, one medium and one large, e.g.
 - ★ Small, medium and large cups
 - ★ Small, medium and large pencils
 - ★ Small, medium and large dolls
- Put out a set of three items (e.g. the three cups).
- Point to each corresponding cup in turn, saying:
 - ★ 'This cup is small, this cup is big and this cup is the...'
- Can the child fill in the gap and say 'biggest' when you pause?
- Now starting with the biggest cup say:
 - ★ 'This cup is big, this cup is smaller and this cup is the ...'
- Continue with the other sets of items – the pencils can be 'short'/'long', the dolls can be 'short'/'tall', etc.

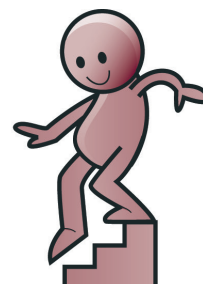


Step up

- Increase the variety of adjectives to describe things (e.g. 'widest', 'thinnest', 'fastest', 'highest').
- Include superlative forms of concepts which will crop up in the curriculum.

Step down

- Start by asking the child to point to the biggest object – emphasising the 'est' syllable.
- As you share books and when out-and-about, talk about the 'tallest' tree in the park, the 'smallest' car at the traffic lights, the 'longest' bus in the bus station, etc.
- Introduce one superlative at a time and use it as often as you can.



Other things to try: 8a

Developing vocabulary skills using 'word webs'

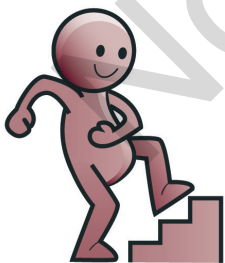


Why is this important?

'Word webs' build vocabulary. They help children make links between new vocabulary and old vocabulary, which means that words can be stored (and retrieved) more accurately/easily and links in meaning can be made. This technique is also referred to as 'mind mapping'.

What to do

- Develop a list of words unfamiliar to the child – this could be new topic vocabulary or words that could arise during everyday activities.
- Introduce the new word (e.g. 'winter').
- Write the word 'winter' in the middle of a piece of paper.
- Ask the child what he/she knows about 'winter'. The child might say 'snow' or 'cold'.
- If the child can't think of anything, find a story about winter (e.g. about a snowman or Christmas) and then start the discussion from there.
- Think about how words might link together and think about action words (e.g. 'shivering', 'sledging') as well as adjectives to describe winter.
- Talk about different clothes to wear in winter and the weather that winter brings.
- Encourage the child to lead the conversation and write down his/her ideas linking them together (e.g. 'winter' links to 'cold' and 'snow'). Think of other things that are cold (e.g. ice-cream).

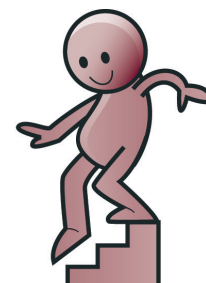


Step up

- Talk about opposites (e.g. 'winter' vs. 'summer').
- Talk about the months that make up winter.
- Find someone who has a birthday in winter and talk about different activities to do in winter as opposed to summer (e.g. stay inside more, put the fire on to keep warm).

Step down

- Start by talking about things that the child can see (e.g. snow). This is easier to begin with as the child can relate to it.
- Make a 'picture' word web.
- Use real objects to demonstrate the connections.



Other things to try: 8b

Re-telling simple stories

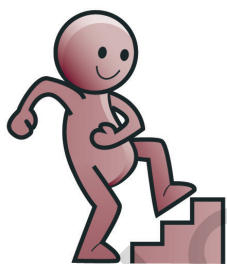


Why is this important?

Children need to practise a variety of grammatical structures and new vocabulary. Re-telling stories helps develop narrative skills. With familiar story characters, children don't have to generate all the imaginative ideas themselves and can concentrate on the words and structures needed to re-tell the tale. Retelling stories also helps with sequencing skills and prediction.

What to do

- Tell a short story. This could be something that actually happened, at the weekend perhaps, or a short fairy tale.
- Ask the child to tell *you* the event/story. Use prompts if needed.
- Try writing down the information the child gives, or draw pictures. Then you can prompt the 'missing' bits or re-order them to make the story.
- Use the framework of a story grid to guide the child to give the information, e.g.
 - ★ Who's in the story?
 - ★ Where did the story happen?
 - ★ What happened at the beginning?
 - ★ What happened in the middle?
 - ★ What happened at the end?



Step up

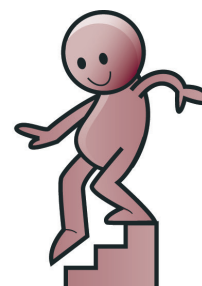
- Reduce the number of cues and prompts.
- Use a greater number of sequencing cards where the correct order is less obvious.
- Encourage the child to sequence the cards him/herself.
- Include less familiar stories.
- Encourage the child to make up his/her own short stories.

Step down

- Use real objects and act the story as a short drama.
- Use photographs of children taking part in real-life events.
- Start with sequence cards that show something happening (e.g. building a sandcastle, then the sea comes in and knocks it down). The child will be able to

use the cards as prompts to recall events and sequence them appropriately.

- Use toys to act out short stories. The child will remember better if he/she sees the story unfold and carries out the action (e.g. pretend playground).



Other things to try: 8c

Understanding and using concepts

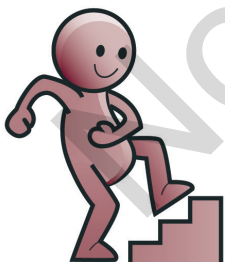


Why is this important?

Concepts are many and varied and are an essential tool in a child's 'language box'. They are used to describe things – colour, shape, size, texture or time (e.g. 'first', 'last', 'before') and form the foundation for many aspects of the curriculum later on.

What to do

- Make a list of concepts coming up in various curriculum areas. This may include concepts that the child hasn't yet mastered or may relate to topics that are to be introduced in class.
- If the topic is 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', the child will need to know the concepts 'hard' and 'soft', which relate to the beds and chairs (e.g. this bed is too 'hard'; this bed is too 'soft').
- Walk around at school or at home and talk about different objects that are 'hard' (e.g. cup, table, pen) and 'soft' (e.g. teddy, towel, curtains). Encourage the child to feel the objects – 'hard' objects tend to feel cold whereas 'soft' objects are often warmer.
- Write down the names of things and take photos/find pictures of similar objects in magazines, etc.
- Use a scrapbook/exercise book and using two pages, write one concept in the middle of each page. Use the photos/cut-out pictures or draw pictures of the objects, stick them around the concept, talking about them and generating more ideas.
- Link the concept into the topic, reading the relevant part of the story.

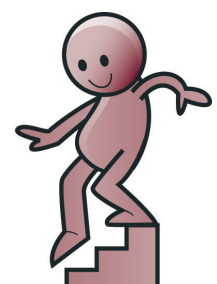


Step up

- Talk about items not present (which draw upon the child's experience and knowledge of the world) and discuss the kinds of describing words that might be used (e.g. a spoon or a fork are made of metal and might be cold or heavy).
- Discuss the properties of objects and how they can be related together (e.g. things made of plastic).

Step down

- Start by introducing one concept at a time and talking about things that are (e.g. 'hard' vs. 'not hard').
- Match items according to the key property.
- Match pictures of items.



Section 9

Not for distribution

Section 9

Not for distribution

Section 9.1

Understanding which day comes next

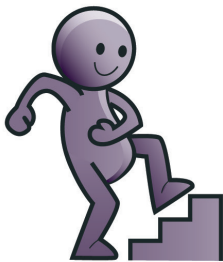


Why is this important?

Knowing the days of the week and the events that occur on particular days helps children learn routines. This is how children learn to understand and describe time beyond what happens every day. It also enables them to accept change when something different happens (e.g. no swimming this Wednesday).

What to do

- Make a chart together. Put the days of the week across the top. It may be helpful to do Monday–Friday in a different colour from Saturday–Sunday.
- Encourage the child to draw a picture of something he/she does each day (e.g. swimming, PE, assembly, music).
- Talk about the activities in relation to the days of the week, e.g.
 - ★ Adult: ‘On Monday you go swimming, and the day after Monday is ...?’
 - ★ Pause to see if the child can fill in the missing day. Prompt him/her by using his/her pictures (e.g. ‘You do PE on this day’).
 - ★ Child: ‘Tuesday’ and adult repeats: ‘So the day after Monday is ...?’



Step up

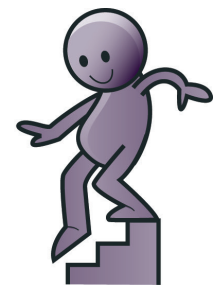
- Talk about the day ‘before’ and the day ‘after’.
- Introduce times of day (e.g. put the days of the week across the top and times of day (morning/afternoon/evening) down the left-hand side). Fill in the activities that are done at various times.
- Put the days of the week in order using photos/pictures/symbols/written words.
- Find the day ‘before’/‘after’ a given day.
- Talk about Saturday and Sunday being ‘the weekend’.

Step down

- Learn the sequence by rote.
- Offer a choice (e.g. ‘What’s the day after Monday? Is it Tuesday or Saturday?’).
- Use symbols, gestures and photos of key events to help understanding.
- When the child is involved in the activities on his/her charts, refer to the days of the week (e.g. ‘Its Monday

today so we’ll be going swimming’).

- Use the chart to introduce changes to activities (e.g. if swimming is cancelled that week, remove the activity and replace it with something else that is happening).



Section 9.2

Understanding passive sentences

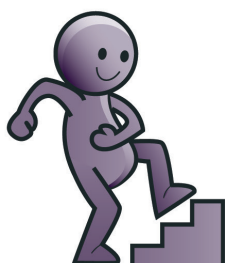


Why is this important?

Understanding more complex sentences enables children to process more complex instructions and prepares them for using sophisticated structures that convey subtle differences in meaning. The passive voice is often quite challenging in terms of children's grammatical development because they cannot rely on word order.

What to do

- Gather together some toys and everyday objects, e.g.
 - ★ Two favourite dolls such as Batman, Barbie, Bob the Builder.
 - ★ Cup, play food, sponge, brush, car, ball.
- Ask the child to listen to the instruction and then do the action, e.g.
 - ★ 'Batman is fed a banana by Spiderman.'
 - ★ 'The car is washed by Bob the Builder.'
 - ★ 'Barbie's hair is brushed by Dora.'

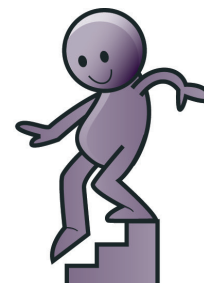


Step up

- Make sure the child has a choice of toys/objects from which he/she has to choose the ones to follow the instructions.
- Add in additional adjectives to increase the processing load (e.g. 'The *blue* ball is thrown by the *tall* girl').

Step down

- You use the toys to demonstrate as you give the instructions, then repeat the *same* instruction for the child.
- You choose the toys so the selection is already made (e.g. for 'Batman is fed a banana by Spiderman', give the child Batman, banana and Spiderman).
- When sharing books, or out-and-about, comment on what is happening using passive sentences (e.g. 'Oh look, the ball is thrown by the girl', 'The go-kart is driven by the boy').
- Slow down your rate of delivery when saying the sentence.



Section 9.3

Identifying an increasing range of emotions and feelings in ourselves and others



Why is this important?

Facial expressions convey numerous and complex emotional states and we begin to infer another person's feelings by watching how they react/feel (from happiness, sadness, anxiety, etc.). They are an important part of emotional intelligence and link closely to being able to make inferences. (For more information, refer to the *WellComm Handbook*.)

What to do

- In pairs or a small group, act out scenarios by allocating roles: a scene in a shop perhaps – a long queue, an annoyed customer, etc.
- Encourage children to work out feelings from gestures, tone of voice, body language and facial expression.
- Use illustrated stories or composite pictures: look at the scene and then work out the feelings of the characters (e.g. a messy bedroom discovered by Mum! 'Look at her face, how does she feel?').



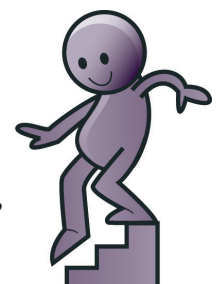
Step up

- Without using pictures, use more subtle words for inferencing (e.g. thoughtful, serious).
- Use more complex composite pictures, taking in the peripheral/less obvious characters and encourage inference (e.g. 'Who has to wait a long time?' for a child at the back of the queue for the swing in the park).
- Each child has a card: in a group, children take turns to act out the feelings on their picture card and the others must guess what it is.
- If the group can manage this successfully, try taking turns around the group to suggest reasons *why* Ahmed/Ben/Sonny/Jane might feel as they do.
- Read a sentence or paragraph where the child is encouraged to reflect on how the characters are feeling (e.g. 'Jack ran very quickly because the giant was chasing him. How did Jack feel? Why?').

Step down

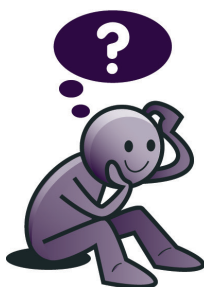
- Use puppets for the role play.
- Don't use pictures.
- Use a simpler story.
- Make facial expressions and body

- language very obvious.
- Add speech bubbles to the toys (e.g. 'He feels worried, what might he say?').



Section 9.4

Beginning to understand idioms

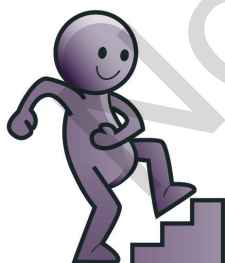


Why is this important?

An idiom is a phrase where the words, when put together, have a meaning which is different from that of the words when used individually (e.g. 'Pull your socks up' has nothing to do with the action of pulling or socks). This makes idioms tricky to understand and learn, but there are lots of them in the English language.

What to do

- Compile a list of idioms/phrases/sayings that are used on a regular basis, e.g.
 - ★ 'On the other hand.'
 - ★ 'Raining cats and dogs.'
 - ★ 'A piece of cake.'
 - ★ 'Don't cry over spilt milk.'
 - ★ 'Pulling your leg.'
 - ★ 'Feeling under the weather.'
- Choose one idiom at a time and write down two or three alternatives to the meaning (e.g. for 'Pull your socks up'):
 - ★ Make sure your socks are always tidy.
 - ★ Try harder.
 - ★ Put your socks away tidily.
- Ask the child to say what he/she thinks the idiom means. Talk through the options. Put the idiom in a scenario. For example, a girl is doing her numbers in school. The teacher knows she is good at number work and says 'Come on Emily, pull your socks up and then you can go out to play'.
- Work through various idioms and try to use examples in everyday conversation that illustrate how idioms are used and what they mean. If you hear someone use an idiom, comment on it and explain the meaning.

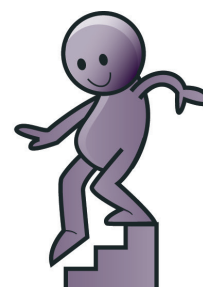


Step up

- Encourage the child to use idioms to describe what people might say in story books in a certain situation (e.g. a story where a child is really happy because she got a new bike – 'the girl is over the moon').

Step down

- Start with one or two idioms and use these in various situations before teaching others.
- Show pictures or photographs (e.g. 'It's raining cats and dogs') which would demonstrate a literal meaning, and laugh about it!



Section 9.5

Predicting what might happen next



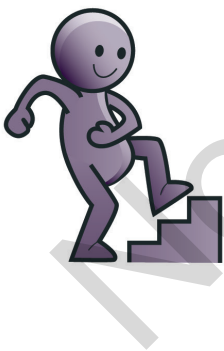
Why is this important?

Children need to learn to predict in order to problem-solve and decide what, in all probability, is going to happen next. This involves analysing and synthesising information.

What to do

- Read a story together. This might be a fairy story, a book from the library, school reading book or story in a child's magazine.
- Read a few pages to introduce the characters.
- At key places, stop and before you turn the page, ask: 'What do you think might happen next?'
- The child may need more guidance and more direct questions (e.g. when reading 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', you could ask 'Whose house do you think she will find?' After she's eaten the porridge, ask 'What's Goldilocks going to do now?' and when the bears come home, ask 'What do you think the bears are going to find?').
- In the 'Oxford Reading Tree*' stories, there is often something 'funny' that happens on the last page. Stop before this page to ask the child what he/she thinks might happen at the end.

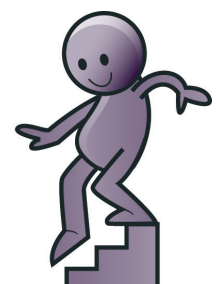
Step up



- Some fairy stories do have slightly different endings. For example, in the 'Three Little Pigs', sometimes the first two pigs get eaten and sometimes they all live together in the brick house; sometimes the wolf is burned in the fire and sometimes he just burns his bottom and runs off never to be seen again. Talk about these differences – does the child prefer one ending?
- Present a problem and think of alternative solutions (e.g. the boy can't find his shoes, what might/could he do?).

Step down

- Offer choices about what might happen next (e.g. in Goldilocks you could ask 'Do you think she's going to find a bears' house or a pigs' house?').
- Use toy materials (e.g. stand a figure by a swing and ask 'What do you think she wants to go on next?').



*The Oxford Reading Tree is available from Oxford University Press (www.oup.com).

Section 9.6

Understanding periods of time



Why is this important?

Understanding milestones of time (e.g. days of the week, months of the year, seasons) provides structure and routine and helps children analyse what is a complex concept.

What to do

- Start with the days of the week: there are rhymes and songs to help remember the days.
- Make a chart putting the days at the top.
- Talk about what happens on the different days. Use the school-day and children's home-life experiences to pinpoint key events (e.g. there may be PE on a Monday, music on a Thursday, etc. At home there may be swimming on a Tuesday and a visit to Grandma on Sunday).
- Talk about Monday–Friday being 'school' days and Saturday–Sunday as 'home' days.
- Use an arrow to point to what day it is and talk about key things that happened yesterday and events that are going to happen tomorrow.
- Use photographs of the child engaging in activities to help him/her remember.

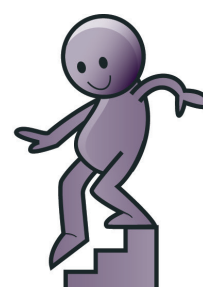


Step up

- Talk about time concepts (e.g. 'yesterday'/'tomorrow'/'next week'/'the weekend').
- Move on to the months of the year. Again, talk about key events that happen in each month (e.g. Valentine's Day, birthdays, different kinds of weather, Christmas, Hanukah, Eid, bonfire night). Make a circular chart to demonstrate that the months go round and round.
- Link seasons with months of the year: again, talk about the weather differences and key events that happen in winter, spring, etc.
- Look at clothes for different seasons and weather systems.

Step down

- Draw pictures/use symbols to represent events (e.g. for PE, music, swimming). You could use photos of family members who are visiting.
- Use real objects to represent key days (e.g. a towel for swimming on Monday, a book for library on Tuesday).



Section 9.7

Remembering more and more information



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to remember increasingly longer and more complicated information. This develops their memory skills, which is important for language.

What to do

- Shopping games (e.g. 'I went to the shops and bought ...') and variations of this, such as packing for a holiday, are ideal opportunities for remembering increasing amounts of information!
- Assemble a small group of children.
- You start the game by saying 'I went to the shop and bought a *banana*'.
- The next child repeats what you said and then adds another item (e.g. 'I went to the shop and bought a *banana* and some *biscuits*').
- Then the next child repeats the sentence and adds *another* item – and so on until you think it's time to stop!

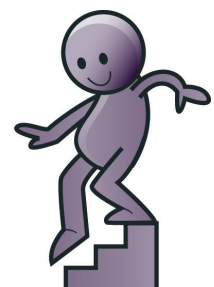


Step up

- Try shopping or packing using the letters of the alphabet in order as children choose their items. To help with this, use a letter chart or select items all beginning with a key sound (e.g. cup, cap, cloth).
- Cut down the number of cues.
- Mix up the semantic groups (e.g. animals/transport/food).

Step down

- Use prompts to help children remember, e.g.
 - ★ Pictures – so the children see the items first, or the card is turned over so they have a concrete reminder of how many things they have to recall.
 - ★ Initial sounds – everything begins with a certain sound.
 - ★ Symbols can also help to facilitate recall of an item.
- Try to cut down on the background distractions which may prevent children from listening and remembering.



Section 9.8

Using category names and explaining the differences between things in the same category/finding the odd one out

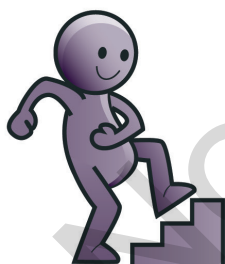


Why is this important?

As language skills develop, children learn to be able to identify and explain increasingly more subtle differences between things.

What to do

- Gather together some pictures/objects from a variety of categories (e.g. clothes, food, toys, furniture, transport, animals).
- Choose three pictures/objects from the *same* category (e.g. three animals). Two of the animals must have something in common and one must be different (e.g. horse, cow, fish).
- Put out these three pictures. Ask which group *all* the pictures belong to. If this is difficult, offer a choice 'Are these clothes or animals?'
- Ask which two pictures go together best (e.g. horse and cow).
- Ask why: there could be several reasons (e.g. four legs, farm animals, live in fields).
- Ask what's different about the other animal (e.g. fish).

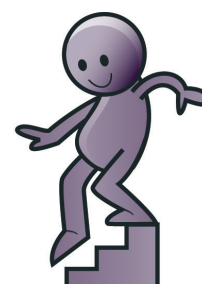


Step up

- Ask the child to generate other animals that would go with the horse and cow (e.g. sheep, pig). You could think of other animals with four legs or other animals that belong on a farm. Which ones live on a farm *and* have four legs?
- Move on to objects that have *more* similarities so that it's harder to find a 'difference' (e.g. cat, dog, rabbit – all pets and have four legs). There may be several answers that are correct (e.g. take dog for a walk, rabbit hops, rabbit likes different foods, cat and dog have longer tails).
- Move on to different categories (e.g. furniture) or use topic vocabulary to discuss differences (e.g. between kings and queens, characters in fairy stories).

Step down

- Start with two objects from one category and one from a different category making sure that the child knows the category names (e.g. hat, jumper, banana).



Section 9.9

Making inferences using idioms

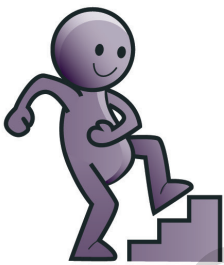


Why is this important?

Inferencing is a key strand in the development of language understanding. Idioms are a more advanced form of non-literal abstract language processing. Linking them together increases the complexity of linguistic understanding required. However, without understanding this level of language complexity, children find it difficult to get beyond the literal interpretation.

What to do

- On an individual basis or in pairs, act out a little story from pictures (e.g. missing the bus, dropping the eggs out of the shopping basket – how do people feel?).
- Use a picture that includes inference and idiom (e.g. ‘Farida is in bed – how does she feel?’, ‘Farida has a frog in her throat. Is it true that Farida has a frog in her throat?’).
- If the child says ‘yes’ discuss what the idiom actually means.
- If the child says ‘no’, ask ‘So why is Farida saying this?’

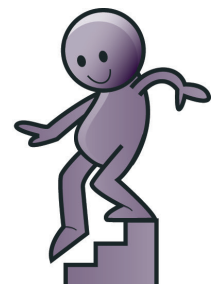


Step up

- Use inference and idiom in a story with no pictures.
- Use idioms in the picture inferences.
- Use available material to encourage the child to describe what is happening, identify the problem/s and explain some possible solutions.
- Suggest what might happen.

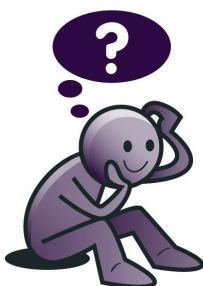
Step down

- Take away the idioms and encourage inference from a story told without pictures.
- Use puppets for inferencing only.
- Use pictures to support both inference and the use of idioms (e.g. one picture showing ‘family eating at the dinner table’, next picture shows ‘one child left at dinner table and everyone’s gone outside to play’. Mum says ‘You’re eating at a snail’s pace’ – use the pictures to work out what is meant).
- Slow down the rate of delivery to facilitate processing.



Section 9.10

Talking about things that are going to happen (the future tense)

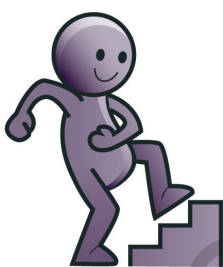


Why is this important?

Children need to be able to explain routines and events that they know will happen, either soon or over a longer timescale. They also need to be able to predict circumstances and events that might happen. For any or all of these, the future tense is important.

What to do

- Gather together some food items and play a shopping game together.
- Give the child a list of items (in picture format) that he/she needs to buy from the shop. Ask:
 - ★ 'What are you going to buy from the shop?'
- Expect the child to use the lead-in phrase ...
 - ★ 'I'm going to buy ...'
- Encourage the child to remember the items he/she needs and ask the shop-keeper (adult) for it.
- Repeat the sequence until the child has collected all the items on the 'list'.

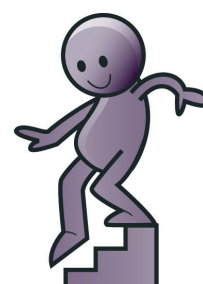


Step up

- When the child 'returns' from the shop ask: 'What did you buy?' This will also require understanding and use of the past tense. Use the lead-in phrase 'I went to the shops and bought ...'
- Move onto more complex future tense structures (e.g. 'I will buy', 'I shall buy').
- Use sequence cards or draw sequences of something about to happen, something happening and then something that has happened. Can the child use the correct tenses for each (e.g. mum is going to make a cup of tea, mum is making a cup of tea, mum has made a cup of tea).
- Talk about things that are going to happen tomorrow or at the weekend (e.g. the arrival of visitors, someone's birthday).

Step down

- Reverse the roles to begin with so the adult goes shopping first.
- When the child has finished an activity, introduce the idea of something happening next by asking 'What would you like to play next?'
- Use visual prompts (e.g. written word support cards).



Other things to try: 9a

Supporting language understanding and use by using visual prompts

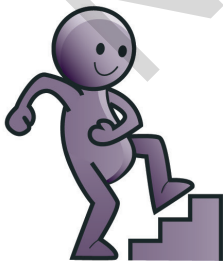


Why is this important?

Using a range of strategies (e.g. visual cues, spoken words, gestures) helps children understand and remember what is said. This also helps them to learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures.

What to do

- Before telling a story (at group story time), gather together some pictures or objects that represent the people or things in the story (e.g. in the 'Three Little Pigs' you could use pictures or puppets of the pigs and the wolf to represent the characters). Story sacks are good for this too.
 - As the story progresses, use the objects or pictures to help you act out what is happening.
 - You could also try acting out the story together as it is being told, then afterwards encourage the child to retell the story using the props or gestures as prompts.
 - Structured group times are excellent opportunities to continue to use these ideas to support and enhance communication:
- ★ *News time*: Encourage children to bring an object to school representing something they've done over the holidays/weekend (e.g. a shell from the beach, a carrier bag from a shop).
 - ★ *Family news*: Encourage children to create or bring a scrapbook to school with pictures/photos of where they live, favourite toys, family members, etc.
 - ★ *Friends*: Encourage children to draw a picture or bring a photo of their best friend and the things they like to do together.

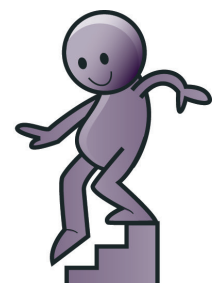


Step up

- Encourage the children to recall what they've heard with minimal prompts.
- Encourage children to ask each other questions or comment on each others' stories/news. Talk about how the story or theme makes them feel and what they liked/didn't like.

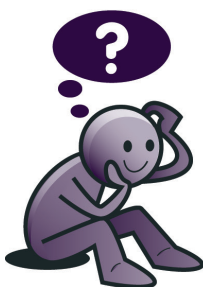
Step down

- Let children show the group their objects/pictures whilst an adult says the words for them.
- When acting out a story together, encourage children to copy what you do rather than asking them to remember what happened.



Other things to try: 9b

Describing what might happen next



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to sequence in order to be able to organise their thoughts and ideas to describe an event or tell a story. Sequencing is a key skill across many areas of the curriculum and is important when processing sentences and understanding chunks of narrative.

What to do

- Draw or gather together pictures of familiar everyday sequences, e.g.
 - ★ Making a cup of tea.
 - ★ Going down a slide.
 - ★ Washing hands.
 - ★ Making a sandwich.
 - ★ Brushing teeth.
- Two pictures show the first and second part of the sequence, e.g. for ‘washing hands’:
 - ★ First picture – child with dirty hands.
 - ★ Second picture – child washing hands with soap and water.
- Ask the child to finish the sequence by saying what will happen next (e.g. dry hands/rinse hands/turn taps off). The child may say something different from what you were thinking. Discuss the differences and draw/show a picture to finish the sequence.

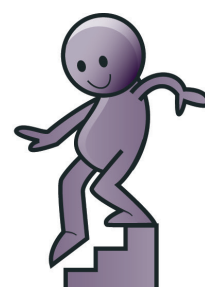
Step up



- Encourage the child to think up a whole sequence of events, or just give the middle picture – can they think up the first and last pictures to complete the sequence?
- Use longer sequences or include more detail (e.g. dirty hands/run water/add soap/rinse/dry).
- Move into the realm of inferences so that there are two different, but equally valid end points to a sequence.
- Add in feelings: this is how the story/sequence ends because of ‘X’, and ‘Y’ feels ‘Z’. If the story ends like this..., etc.

Step down

- Start by using all three pictures and talking through the sequences.
- Talk about sequences as they happen (e.g. when putting shoes/coat on, making lunch, pouring a drink).
- If the child finds it difficult to generate an end to the sequence, offer a choice (e.g. ‘Will the girl dry her hands or jump up and down?’).



Not for distribution

Attention and listening skills

Not for distribution



Attention and listening skills

Not for distribution

Introduction

Like other skills, children's attention develops in stages; therefore it's important to try and evaluate the level of attention skills the child has reached (for further details, see the WellComm *Handbook* page 49). The table below outlines the age you might start expecting children to achieve a specific level of attention and listening skills; however, these ages are given as guidelines only.

Normal Development of Attention and Listening	
Level (Age Equivalent)	Description
Level One (up to 12 months)	Characterised by extreme distractibility, when the child's attention flits from one object or person to another. Any new event, such as someone walking by, will immediately distract him/her.
Level Two (12 months to 2 years)	The child will concentrate on a concrete task of his/her own choosing, but will not tolerate any interference from an adult. Attention is 'single channelled' meaning he/she must ignore all outside distractions in order to concentrate on what he/she is doing.
Level Three (2 to 3 years)	Attention is still single channelled (see above). However, although the child cannot listen to an adult's directions whilst playing, he/she can shift attention to the speaker and back to the task with some help.
Level Four (3 to 4 years)	Without help, the child is now able to shift attention between a task and an adult's instruction.
Level Five (4 to 5 years)	Without stopping to look at the speaker, the child can now understand and follow verbal instructions related to the task. The child's concentration span may be short but he/she can now be taught in a group.
Level Six (5 years +)	Attention is well established and maintained. The child can integrate auditory, visual and kinaesthetic senses (i.e. touch and movement) to attend, listen and do.

Adapted from J. Cooper, M. Moodley and J. Reynell. 1978. *Helping Language Development*. London: Edward Arnold.

Level Two and Level Three

Children need to develop concentration in order to be able to learn. Sustained attention leads to being able to focus on a task for longer and builds up to being able to cope when there are more distractions around. At this level, children are less able to shift their attention from one thing to another, thereby limiting the interactive aspect of more mature attention and listening skills. It is therefore important to introduce activities that last for longer and have a turn-taking dimension. Here are some general principles/strategies that you may find useful to develop children's attention and listening skills. Remember the ability to listen is also a learned skill.

Listen then do

On school entry, a typically developing child will be able to carry out a task and, at the same time, listen to the teacher and then carry out the instruction. However, some children will still be at the stage of only being able to do one thing at a time. This means they will be able to either focus on what they are doing or on what the adult says – but not both. In these cases, call the child's name first before you give an instruction.

Waiting games

These can also help build attention: for example, the child has to wait for 'Go!' when you say 'Ready, Steady ... Go!' This can be used for lots of activities where the child can carry out an action/do something (e.g. when going down a slide/hitting balls with a hammer or pressing a button on a pop-up toy). You will need to judge or try out how long you stretch out the pause between 'Steady' and 'Go!' Some children will be able to wait for the whole instruction and you simply extend the pause. Other children can't wait and will need to start with a quick 'Ready ... Go!' and build up from there.

Following instructions of increasing length

From the information obtained from the WellComm Screening Tool, you will be able to focus tasks appropriately. Some of the 'understanding language' strategies may also be useful.

Shopping games

A simple way to increase the length of an instruction is through memory games (e.g. a shopping game). The number of items you ask for is obviously important. Start by asking for one item. The number of items that the child has to choose from is just as important. At the beginning ask for 'X' number of items from a choice that is 'X' + one. Then increase the choice to select from, e.g.

- One from two, then three, then four (up to six)
- Two from three, then four (up to six)
- Three from four, then five (up to six)
- Four from five, then six

Sometimes, for example, the move from two items to three is too difficult and the child fails to get three from a choice of four when he/she can get two from a choice of six. In this case, keep to the level the child can manage successfully and move the selection further away physically so that the child has to retain the information. There is a key strand in the WellComm *Handbook* relating to auditory memory and sequencing that will also inform your practice for individual children.

This type of strategy is particularly useful for those children who start to carry out an instruction before you have finished speaking. As above, a hand in front of the child's hands may be enough of a prompt to show the need to wait as you speak. At the end of the instruction lift your hand away. As the child gets used to waiting, you can withdraw your hand.

Level Four and Five

All of the games and activities suggested in Level Three can be used at Level Four or Five as attention skills become more developed.

Matching musical instruments

Attention skills are needed to do this successfully. Have two sets of matching musical instruments (e.g. two or three of each). Have a barrier in between the two sets. The child sits on one side and you on the other. After demonstrating how the instruments sound, play an instrument and ask the child to play the same one. As this happens, lift your instrument up to show if they are the same. There is no need to say 'no': just show what you had and say something like 'Oh, I played this one'. Build up the number of instruments you play as the child succeeds.

Level Six

In order to progress at school and in life, children need to be able to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time. The skills of remembering and sequencing are core learned skills and need practice to develop. Both skills are closely linked to attention and listening and involve proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses as well as visual and auditory channel. All these skills are used interactively.

Attention and Listening 2a

Level Two (12 months–2 years) Familiar noises in the environment

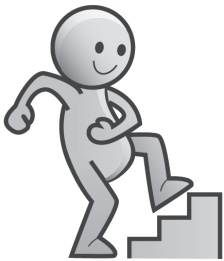


Why is this important?

Right from the very beginning, children need to attend and listen to sounds around them in order to learn effective communication. It's important to remember that this is a learned skill.

What to do

- Sit together in a quiet room and talk about the sounds you can hear around you (e.g. cars on the road, a dog barking, birds singing).
- Find a noisy toy or object (e.g. a loudly ticking clock) and hide it around the room. Encourage the child to find the noisy object.

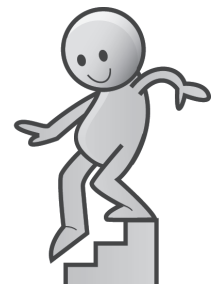


Step up

- Encourage the child to listen and show or tell you what he/she hears.
- When hiding a noisy toy to find, cover the object completely so the child has to rely on listening only to find the prize (e.g. a ticking clock).

Step down

- Draw attention to the sounds you hear by pointing to or showing where the noise is coming from.
- When hiding a noisy toy to find, leave part of the toy uncovered so that it can be seen as well as heard. If necessary, help guide the child to where the toy is hidden.
- Give a picture prompt to help.



Attention and Listening 2b

Nursery rhymes are the greatest fun!

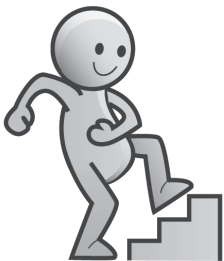


Why is this important?

Nursery rhymes are an essential part of developing good language (and ultimately good literacy) skills. Rhymes are beneficial in attention and listening: they also make playing with sounds and actions sociable and fun which are, in themselves, important skills for communication. Engaging by responding in nursery rhymes shows that children are listening and attending – this could be through pausing, waiting and anticipating.

What to do

- Sing nursery rhymes together. Examples of rhymes include:
 - ★ ‘Row, Row, Row the Boat.’
 - ★ ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.’
 - ★ ‘Wind the Bobbin’ Up.’

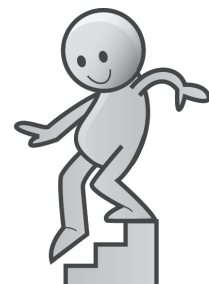


Step up

- Introduce a range of nursery rhymes.
- Pause part way through to give the child the opportunity to take the lead (either by making a sound or action).

Step down

- Focus on only one or two favourite rhymes at a time.
- Gently hold hands to help the child join in with the actions.
- Try to be face-to-face so that your face and actions are easy to see.
- Encourage other children to join in as good models.
- Sing together when the child is in the bath or high chair, it may be easier to concentrate if the opportunity to move away is reduced.



Attention and Listening

2c

Turn-taking

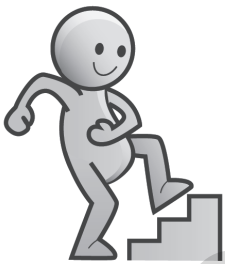


Why is this important?

An important communication skill in its own right, turn-taking is fun and interactive and will develop children's attention and listening skills towards the next level. Children need to learn to wait while another person has a turn, yet remain focused on the task.

What to do

- Play a simple turn-taking game like rolling a ball between you. Other ideas could include rolling a car along the floor, taking turns banging a musical instrument/ noisy toy, putting a shape in a shape sorter, working a pop up toy, etc. Try to choose a high-interest activity.
- When the child understands the game, see if he/she will wait for 'Ready, steady, go' before taking a turn.

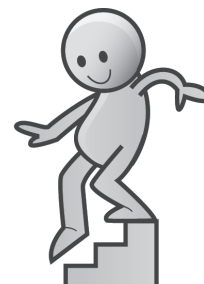


Step up

- Increase the length of the wait between turns, either by taking longer to say 'Ready, Steady ... Go' or by playing turn-taking games where each turn takes a little longer.
- Increase the range of turn-taking games you play together.

Step down

- Gently hold hands to encourage the child wait for his/her turn.
- Play games where the turns come rapidly and the wait is short.



Attention and Listening 3a

Level Three (2–3 years)

Locating the direction of less obvious sounds

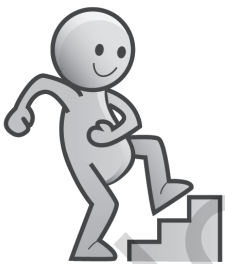


Why is this important?

Children need to develop concentration in order to be able to learn. Sustained attention leads to being able to focus on a task for longer and builds up to being able to cope when there are more distractions around.

What to do

- Use a noisy toy (e.g. a wind-up toy).
- Turn three boxes upside-down.
- Put the toy in one of the boxes. Can the child find it?
- Encourage the child to close his/her eyes. Hide the toy.
- Can the child find where the sound is coming from?

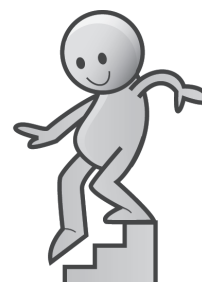


Step up

- Use quieter toys so that the child has to listen more carefully.
- Hide a ticking clock or noisy toy in a room. Can the child locate where the sound is coming from?
- Work with a small group: sit one child in the middle of a circle, with his/her eyes closed or blind-folded, with the other children round the outside. A child on the outside of the circle rings a bell. Can the child in the centre identify who rang the bell?

Step down

- Encourage the child to 'look' to begin with until he/she has grasped the activity.
- Use two boxes to begin with and place them apart (i.e. one to the left of the child and one to the right).



Attention and Listening 3b

Watching, remembering and copying what someone else is doing!

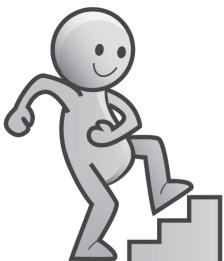


Why is this important?

Children need to develop concentration in order to be able to learn. Sustained attention leads to being able to focus on a task for longer and builds up to being able to cope when there are more distractions around.

What to do

- This game is also known as 'Follow-my-Leader'.
- Carry out different actions (e.g. jumping, standing on one leg, touching your nose) and encourage the child to copy what you do.

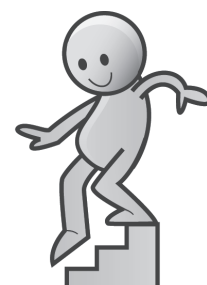


Step up

- Include a time delay so that the adult carries out his/her action and the child has to copy when the adult says 'go'.
- Change the environment (e.g. try the activity in the playground, park, classroom, school hall).
- Try asking the child to copy your facial expressions instead of your actions.
- Allow the child to take turns with you being the leader.
- Use equipment to make the activity more fun (e.g. copy what the adult does in the sandpit, in water play, with the toy cars).
- Ask the child to copy what a person/character is doing in a picture or on the television.
- Do a sequence of two actions (e.g. 'touch nose' and then 'jump'). Can the child follow the sequence?

Step down

- Choose actions that the child can easily recall/do (e.g. jumping).
- Use toys and get the child to copy the actions using toys.
- Try with another child – the child may be happier to copy what another child is doing rather than an adult.



Attention and Listening 3c

Listening to sounds and reacting when they stop

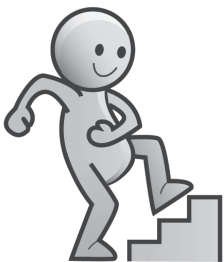


Why is this important?

Children need to develop concentration in order to be able to learn. Sustained attention leads to being able to focus on a task for longer and builds up to being able to cope when there are more distractions around.

What to do

- Start with musical statues: play some music and encourage the children to move around or dance.
- Ask the children to become still like a statue or sit down when the music stops.

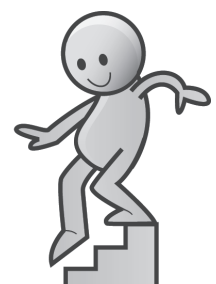


Step up

- Play the music more quietly so the children have to listen harder.
- Turn the music off for longer so the children have to stay still for longer each time.
- Play animal sounds rather than music and encourage the children to 'act out' the animals, rather than dancing, and then stop when the animal noise stops.
- Play 'Stop, Go' where the children are asked to carry out an activity (e.g. run across the room, jump up and down, 'drive' their toy car across the room) and stop when the adult says 'stop'.
- Play 'Pass the Parcel': the child opens a layer of wrapping when the music stops.

Step down

- Keep the music pauses shorter so the children don't have to stay still for as long.
- Include other children to provide good role models.
- The child may find it easier to play musical chairs where there is a chair to sit on or a hoop to stand in when the music stops.



Attention and Listening 4a

Level Four (3–4 years)

Matching a sound to an object

(i) Animal noises



Why is this important?

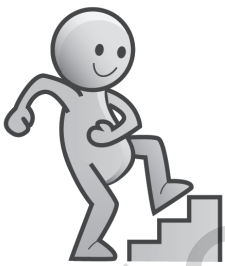
Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. look at items or pictures while *listening* to a sound).

What to do

- Gather together a selection of between one and four animal pictures or toy animals and demonstrate what noises they make.
- Put out the pictures or toys on the floor or a table and explain that you want the child to pick the animal that matches the noise you make.

N.B. The child may copy the sounds you make – encourage this whenever you can.

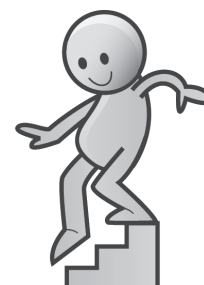
Step up



- Increase the number of choices.
- Use less familiar animals (e.g. donkey, elephant).
- Vary the activity so the child is encouraged to post the matching toy/picture.
- Play 'Hide and Seek' so the child has to find the toy/picture that is hidden around the room.
- Sing 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm'. Say an animal name and encourage the child to find the correct picture. 'Old MacDonald' could have a 'zoo' instead!

Step down

- Give the child fewer alternatives (e.g. use two pictures/ objects instead of four).
- Use a sign, gesture or action alongside the sound you make (which represents the animal making the sound).
- Begin with familiar animals (e.g. cat, dog, duck).



Attention and Listening 4b

Matching a sound to an object (ii) Sounds in the environment



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. look at items or pictures while *listening* to a sound).

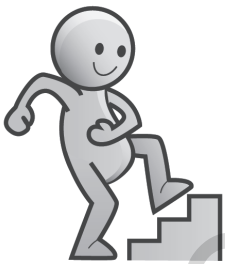
What to do

- Use a series of environmental noises that can be easily copied, e.g.

★ Car – ‘brm-brm’.	★ Clock – ticking.	★ Crisp packet – rustling.
★ Baby – crying.	★ Train – ‘choo-choo’.	★ Spoon in cup.
★ Bell – dingling.	★ Hands – clapping.	★ Set of keys.
- Find pictures of the items (e.g. car, baby) and put out three.
- Make the sound for one of the pictures. Can the child find the right one?

N.B. The child may copy the sounds you make – encourage this whenever you can.

N.B. There are ‘Sound Lottos’ available commercially, or you could record your own.

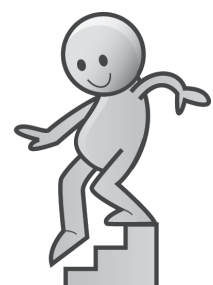


Step up

- Increase the number of choices.
- Use less familiar objects or pictures.
- Vary the activity so the child is encouraged to post the matching picture.
- Play ‘Hide and Seek’ so the child has to find the picture that is hidden around the room.
- Play ‘Sound Lotto’ in full, individually and in a small group.
- Use every opportunity to draw attention to noises in the environment during daily routines both at home and when out and about.
- Use speech sounds with alphabet cards.

Step down

- Give the child fewer alternatives (e.g. use two pictures/objects instead of three).
- Use a gesture or action alongside the sound you make which represents the object making the sound.
- Use familiar objects/pictures.



Attention and Listening 4c

Matching a sound to an object (iii) Musical instruments



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. *look* at items or pictures while *listening* to a sound).

What to do

- Gather together four pairs of musical instruments, e.g.
 - ★ Shakers
 - ★ Bells
- ★ Drum
 - ★ Triangle

N.B. If actual musical instruments are not available, you can make some (e.g. using a bottle and dried rice/pasta for a shaker; an old tin and wooden spoon for drum).

- Show the child each of the instruments and demonstrate the sounds they make.
- Put one set of instruments in front of you and the other set in front of the child.
- You will need a barrier so the child can't see which instrument you are playing (e.g. large book, cushion).
- Ask the child to listen whilst you play one of the instruments and encourage him/her to find his/her instrument which makes the same sound.

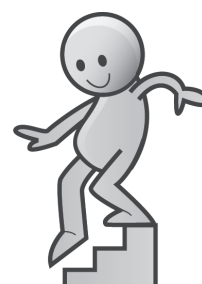


Step up

- Increase the number of instruments.
- Hit the drum or shake the shaker just once so the child has to listen very carefully.
- Try a sequence of two sounds, let the child watch and listen at first and then try with the barrier.

Step down

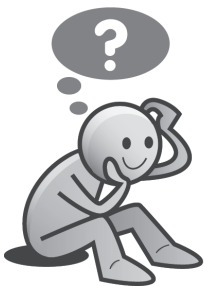
- Give the child fewer alternatives (e.g. use two musical instruments to start with).
- Start without the barrier until the child is confident to choose the right instrument.



Attention and Listening 4d

Listening, remembering and finding two objects (from a choice of three)

(i) Inset puzzle



Why is this important?

Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. *look* at items while *listening* to an instruction to, for example, 'Give me apple and bed'). This is very important for learning in groups. Being able to shift attention from one key focus point to another and back again is the next step forward and again is only learned through practice and step-by-step skill building.

What to do

- Put out an inset puzzle (one with six or more pieces) and just three of the pieces (e.g. dog, cup, tree).
- Ask the child to find two of the pieces at a time and put them in the puzzle, e.g.
 - ★ 'Find cup, dog.'

- N.B. make sure the child picks up *both* pieces before putting them in the puzzle.
- Don't let the child pick up the pieces until you've finished giving the instruction. If necessary, gently hold the child's hands until you've finished talking.

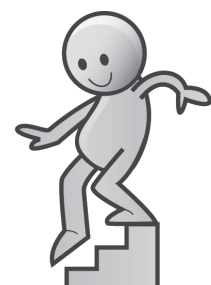
Step up



- Ask the child for more pieces at a time (e.g. three pieces from a choice of four).
- Try this activity in a group (which moves it towards Level Five).
- Ask for the pieces in a different order to how they are laid out on the table/floor.
- Don't use any visual clues when saying the words (e.g. gesture or pictures).
- Place the pieces further away so they have to be remembered for longer as they are retrieved.
- Try asking for a piece by its function or attribute (e.g. 'Find something red', 'Find something you can eat').

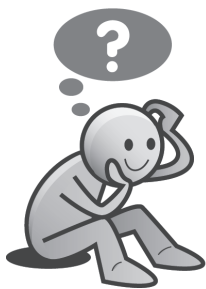
Step down

- To begin with, ask the child for one piece at a time.
- Give the child a choice of two pieces and ask for one of them.
- Ask for the pieces in the same order as they are laid out (i.e. left to right).
- Use gestures as you say the words.
- Show pictures of the pieces you want the child to find.
- Encourage the child to repeat back the piece/s you've asked for (i.e. use verbal rehearsal).
- Put the pieces within easy reach.



Attention and Listening 4e

Listening, remembering and finding two objects (from a choice of three) (ii) Postman Pat



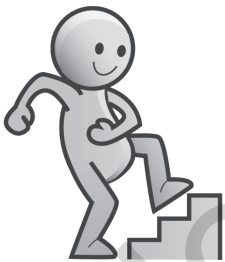
Why is this important?

Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. *look* at items while *listening* to an instruction to, for example, ‘Give me apple and bed’). This is very important for learning in groups. Being able to shift attention from one key focus point to another and back again is the next step forwards and again is only learned through practice and step-by-step skill building.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of familiar objects or pictures.
- Put out a post-box (make this from a shoe box or cereal packet with a hole in it).
- Put out three of the items/pictures and ask the child to post two:
 - ★ ‘Post flower, sock.’
- Don’t let the child pick up the items until you’ve finished giving the instruction. Gently hold the child’s hands until you’ve finished talking if necessary.

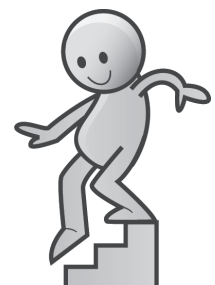
Step up



- Ask the child for more pictures at a time (e.g. ask for three pictures from a choice of four or five).
- Again, try this in a group (which will move children towards Level Five).
- Gradually introduce less familiar vocabulary items.
- Ask for things in a different order from how they are laid out.
- Don’t use any visual clues when saying the words (e.g. gesture).
- Put things further away so they have to be remembered for longer as they are retrieved.
- Try asking for a piece by its function or attribute (e.g. ‘Find something red’ or ‘Find something you can eat’).

Step down

- Use objects rather than pictures and then move on to pictures.
- Start by asking the child for one thing from a choice of two or three.
- When using pictures, ask for them in the order they are laid out (i.e. left to right).
- Use gestures as you say the words.
- Encourage the child to repeat back what you’ve asked for (i.e. use verbal rehearsal).
- Put the pictures within easy reach.



Attention and Listening 5a

Level Five (4–5 years)

Listening, remembering and finding two objects (from a choice of three)

(iii) Shopping game



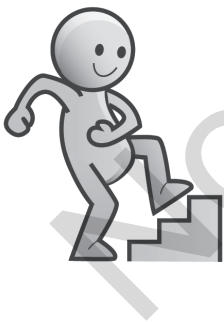
Why is this important?

Children need to be able to integrate auditory and visual information (i.e. *look* at items while *listening* to an instruction to, for example, ‘Give me apple and bed’). This is very important for learning in groups. Being able to shift attention from one key focus point to another and back again is the next step forwards and again is only learned through practice and step-by-step skill building.

What to do

- Gather together a selection of familiar everyday objects (e.g. foods, clothes, furniture).
- Give the child a small bag/basket.
- Put out three items and ask the child to put two at a time into the shopping bag, e.g. ★ ‘Buy biscuits (and) banana.’
- Don’t let the child pick up the items until you’ve finished giving the instruction. Gently hold the child’s hands until you’ve finished talking if necessary.

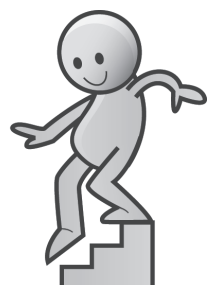
Step up



- Ask for more things at a time (e.g. three from a choice of four).
- Ask for the objects in a different order from how they are laid out.
- Don’t use any visual clues when saying the words (e.g. gesture or pictures).
- Put things further away so they have to be remembered for longer as they are retrieved.
- Try changing the theme of the game to maintain the child’s interest or to fit in with the current curriculum topic (e.g. shopping at the supermarket, clothes shop, jewellers, pet shop, shoe shop). You could also try packing for your holidays (e.g. to a cold or hot destination) or for a picnic.

Step down

- Ask the child for one item to begin with from a choice of two and then three items.
- Ask for things in the same order they are laid out (i.e. left to right).
- Use gestures as you say the words.
- Show pictures of the things you want the child to find.
- Encourage the child to repeat back the objects you’ve asked for (i.e. use verbal rehearsal).
- Put the things within easy reach.
- Work independently or in pairs (which reduces the task to Level Four).



Attention and Listening 6a

Level Six (5+ years) Listening to a story

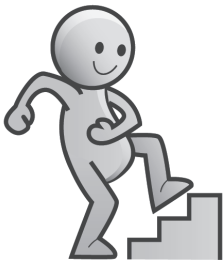


Why is this important?

In order to progress at school and in life, children need to be able to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time.

What to do

- Tell a story and ask a child/or a group of children to listen for particular sounds or words and to either put up their hand or shout out when they hear the target words!

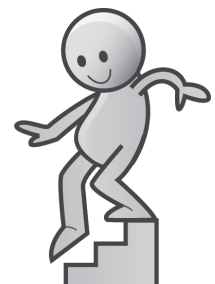


Step up

- Ask different children in the group to listen for different words or sounds.
- Ask the child/children to listen for novel sounds or words.
- Reduce the emphasis and frequency of the target.

Step down

- Ask a group of children to all listen for the same sound/word. This way they can help each other.
- Use a sound/word that is very familiar to individuals (e.g. names).
- Throughout the story, remind the child/children what they are listening for.
- Keep the story short.
- Use visual prompts (e.g. a key card).
- Work around the target word/sound by:
 - ★ Saying it more often.
 - ★ Pausing and looking expectant.
 - ★ Stressing it or saying it more loudly.



Attention and Listening 6b

Playing memory games

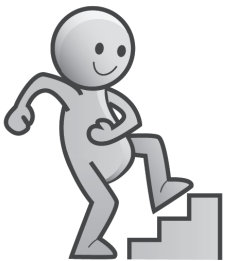


Why is this important?

In order to progress at school and in life, children need to be able to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time.

What to do

- Ask the child to follow three to four short commands involving actions or familiar routines (e.g. 'Touch your toes, point to your nose, turn around and sit down').
- Encourage the child to 'picture the actions in his/her head' as you give the instruction. This can help some children remember.
- You could also encourage the child to repeat back what you've said before carrying out the action. This is another strategy that some children find useful when trying to remember.

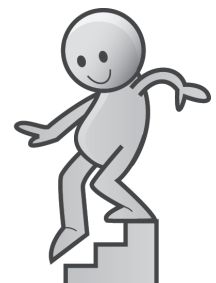


Step up

- Don't give any non-verbal prompts (e.g. pictures or gestures as described above).
- Increase the number of instructions you give.

Step down

- As you give the instructions, demonstrate the actions.
- Ask the child to carry out the actions with you before he/she has a go on his/her own.
- Use pictures of the actions: as you give the instructions, point to or show the child the relevant pictures. Take the pictures away before the child carries out the actions.
- Reduce the number of instructions you give in one go.
- If trying for three actions, repeat one of them (e.g. 'Clap hands, touch head, clap hands').
- Encourage children to work in pairs to support each other to remember at first.



Attention and Listening 6c

Variations on a 'shopping' theme



Why is this important?

In order to progress at school and in life, children need to be able to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time.

What to do

- In a small group, play a game where children have to repeat what the previous child has said and then add something of their own, e.g.
 - ★ 'I went to the zoo and saw a lion, a tiger ...', etc. or 'I went to the shop and bought an apple, some milk ...', etc.
- Each child in the group should repeat the initial sentence (e.g. 'I went to the shop and bought ...'), repeat the items spoken by the other children who have had a turn before them and then add their own items.
- If particular topics are being covered in school, try to link the vocabulary to the topic wherever possible (e.g. if the topic is clothes, then play 'I went to the clothes shop and bought ...').

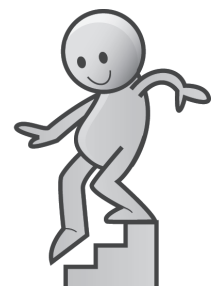


Step up

- Increase the size of the group so more items need to be remembered.

Step down

- Keep the group of children small, thereby reducing the number of things to remember.
- Give clues if children are struggling (e.g. say the first sound of the word for them or describe the object he/she is trying to remember).
- At the beginning of the game, place a pile of upturned pictures in the middle of the group. Each child should select the picture from the pile when it is his/her turn to think of the next item and show it to the group as well as say it. Ensure that the child hides his/her picture once he/she has taken his/her turn. The pictures can be shown again by each child as the person recalling them says the word.



Attention and Listening 6d

'Guess what it is!'

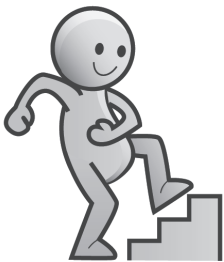


Why is this important?

In order to progress at school and in life, children need to be able to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time.

What to do

- Place some pictures face down. You choose a picture and describe what you can see without saying the name of the item in the picture.
- Encourage the child to listen and guess what you are looking at.

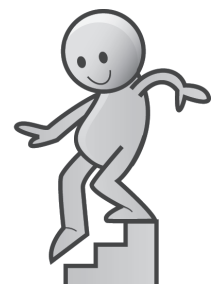


Step up

- Save the most obvious clues until last so the child needs to listen for longer (e.g. for a banana 'It's yellow, you find it in the supermarket, it's a type of food').
- Use less obvious items.

Step down

- Give the most obvious information first, including the first sound in the word (e.g. for a banana 'It begins with the sound 'b'. It's a yellow fruit which is good to eat').
- Stick to a particular topic which the child is familiar with (e.g. fruit).
- Show the pictures before placing them.



Attention and Listening 6e

Using visual supports to help children complete an activity



Why is this important?

Visual prompts and cues help sustain attention. Consider these ideas for helping children to stay on task for varying amounts of time.

What to do

- Make a 'visual timetable' to illustrate how many things need to be done before there is a reward (e.g. playtime).
- Illustrate the activities with either photographs or symbols.
- Put each picture (including the reward picture) on a Velcro strip. Arrange the pictures from either left to right or top to bottom.
- At the beginning of each activity, show the timetable and help the child take the next picture off. Talk about what you're going to do next.
- When the activity has been completed, put the picture in a 'finished box' and return to the timetable to tick off the next activity.

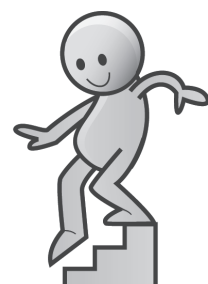
Step up



- Encourage the child to use the timetable independently.
- Increase the number of activities to be completed before the reward.
- For individual activities (e.g. copying shapes, numeracy activities, reading words) use a tick/reward chart to show the child how many things need to be done before being rewarded.

Step down

- Guide the child to the timetable and help take the next picture off.
- Reduce the number of activities before the reward.
- Use real objects instead of pictures, photographs or symbols.



Not for distribution

General strategies

Not for distribution



General strategies

Not for distribution

General strategies

Strategies for developing understanding of language

‘Good looking’

Make sure the child is looking towards the speaker when receiving an instruction. Be specific (e.g. ‘Jack look at me’). Use gestures, pictures, objects to hold the child’s attention; these will also support understanding of the instruction. This is a skill that all children need to develop.

Call their name/s

Some children do not realise that an instruction given to the whole group also applies to them. You can cue them in by using names at the beginning of the instruction. This reduces the risk of the child missing the instruction, e.g.

- ✓ ‘Daniel, Shanice come and sit on the carpet.’
- ✗ ‘Come and sit on the carpet Daniel and Shanice.’

Give the child clear, specific instructions.

Simplify your language

Simplify the length of your instructions. Use short sentences and emphasise key words. Use visual supports such as gesture, objects and pictures to hold up/show as you are giving the instruction.

‘Chunk’ instructions

Chunk instructions by giving one piece of information at a time. Pause, allow the child time to process the language and respond, then give the next chunk of instruction.

Demonstrate

If the child struggles to follow instructions, *demonstrate* what you want him/her to do. Use simple language to *describe* what you are doing. Pair children with a peer who will provide a good role model to copy.

Tell the child what to do

Try and tell the child what you *want* him/her to do, rather than what you *don't* want him/her to do.

- ✗ 'Molly, don't roll on the floor.'
- ✓ 'Molly, show me good sitting.'

Teach vocabulary

Identify key vocabulary coming up in topics across the curriculum. Think about what nouns, verbs and adjectives are going to be used in literacy, numeracy, science, history, etc. Pre-teach the words before the child has to understand and use them. You can do this in a one-to-one situation, small group and whole class. Remember children need to hear a word *many* times before they fully understand it.

A good template to use when teaching new words is to think about:

- What group does it belong to? (category)
- What do you do with it? (function)
- Where do you find it? (location)
- What does it look like? (appearance)
- What else? (relate to the child's own experiences, identify other similar words, words from the same group, words that have the same function)
- How many parts does it have? (syllables)
- What sound does it begin with? (beginning sounds)
- What other sounds can you hear? (middle and end sounds)
- What else sounds like it? (rhyme)

Use lots of resources when teaching new words (e.g. objects, pictures, the real thing) and also relate the new word to the written word. Reinforce the vocabulary at every opportunity by labelling and describing target words as they arise throughout the day. Word webs and mind maps are a useful way to record information about words.

It's a good idea to review words learnt at the end of each session in your plenary. You can ask which details children remember, using the framework above. Share target words with the parent/s so that they can work on words at home.

Question words

Use symbols and signs to support understanding of question words. Be explicit, e.g.

- Ask 'Who is in the garden?'
 - ★ 'Who' needs a person answer.
- Ask 'Can you tell me the person in the garden?'
- Reinforce 'Yes! The man is (in the garden).'

Try to avoid ...

Sarcasm, double meanings and metaphors – particularly when working with younger children. If you do use them, make sure you explain what you mean.

Home–school diary

A picture and/or written diary can help everyone involved (both at home and at school) talk to the child about things that have happened, or what he/she has been doing. Ask the parent/s to send in items that can act as a reminder for children relating to what has been happening (e.g. tickets, a straw from McDonald's, cone from the park, swim hat). These can be used as prompts for story-writing and should help children contribute at 'news time'.

Visual support

Present sequences of instructions visually (e.g. use photos, pictures or symbols to represent each step of the activity). Place pictures on a Velcro strip and encourage children to pull off each picture once each step has been completed. Use the written word alongside the picture.

Not for distribution

General strategies

Strategies for developing use of language

Modelling

Model language throughout the day: talk about what you are doing. Label the equipment you are using and describe actions and events. Think of it as giving a simple running commentary. This will help children to map the language used onto meaningful items and situations, e.g.

- When demonstrating 'sinking'/'floating' in science: hold up the cork and say 'cork', hold up the stone and say 'stone', describe the items (colour, texture, size), describe filling the sink with 'water'/'pouring'/'taps on'/'sink full'/'taps off'/'cork floats'/'cork light'/'cork on top of water'.

Repeat, repeat, repeat

Repetition is important – children need to hear words lots of times before they are ready to use them. Repetition can also be used to affirm what a child has said; this lets the child know you are listening and provides opportunity to hear the phrase/sentence again.

Repeat back the child's utterances, emphasising accurate use of vocabulary and grammar, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'I runned and falled over.'
- ★ Adult: 'Oh, you *ran* and *fell* over.'

Use choices

If the child is unable to respond to an open question, provide a choice. This is helpful because you are providing the words he/she needs and there is still a need for a response (e.g. if the child cannot respond to 'What does it do?', offer a choice: 'Does it run or swim?').

Choices can also be used to help the child correct any errors they might make with vocabulary and/or grammar, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'Susie dropped his bike.'
- ★ Adult: 'Susie dropped his bike or *her* bike?'

Add language

Expand the child's utterances by adding one or two words to what he/she has said and repeating it back, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'Paint flower.'
- ★ Adult: 'Yes you're painting a pink flower.'

Questions

Use open questions (e.g. questions that require more than a yes/no answer):

- ★ 'You have done X, what do you think you do now?'
- ★ 'After X what happens next?'
- ★ 'What does it do?'
- ★ 'What does it look like?'
- ★ 'How does it work?'

If the child doesn't give enough information, use questions to elicit more detail, e.g.

- ★ 'Who are you talking about?'
- ★ 'What did they do?'
- ★ 'What happened next?'
- ★ 'What did you do?'

Where possible, remember to try and phrase the question in a more *reflective* way, to be less directive. Using intonation helps, e.g.

- ★ 'Hmmm, I wonder what the boy is doing?' vs. 'What's the boy doing?'
- ★ 'Let's see if we can find ...' vs. 'Where's the ...?'

Encourage taking messages. Help the child to do this by drawing a picture of a required item to ask for or send children in pairs, each with specific parts of a message to convey.

Vocabulary

As described in the section on strategies for developing understanding of language, it is important to identify key vocabulary coming up in topics across the curriculum. Think about what nouns, verbs and adjectives are going to be used in literacy, numeracy, science, history, etc. Pre-teach the words before the child needs to understand and use them in class. You can do this in a one-to-one situation, small group and whole class.

A good template to use when teaching new words is to think about:

- ★ What group does it belong to? (category)
- ★ What do you do with it? (function)
- ★ Where do you find it? (location)
- ★ What does it look like? (appearance)
- ★ What else? (relate to the child's own experiences, identify other similar words, words from the same group, have the same function)
- ★ How many parts does it have? (syllables)
- ★ What sound does it begin with? (beginning sounds)
- ★ What other sounds can you hear? (middle and end sounds)
- ★ What else sounds like it? (rhyme)

Use lots of resources when teaching new words (e.g. objects, pictures, the real thing) and also relate the new word to the written word. Reinforce the vocabulary at every opportunity by labelling and describing target words as they arise throughout the day. Word webs and mind maps are a useful way to record information about words.

It's a good idea to review words learnt at the end of each session in your plenary. You can ask which details the child remembers from the above framework. Share target words with the parent/s so that they can work on words at home.

Word finding difficulties ... giving cues

If you think a child knows a word but is having difficulties with retrieving the word to name/describe something, cue him/her in by saying 'Think about ...':

- ★ 'What does it look like?'
- ★ 'What do you use it for?'
- ★ 'Show me.'
- ★ 'What sound does it begin with?'
- ★ 'Is it a long or a short word?'

Home-school diary

A picture and/or written diary can help everyone involved (both at home and at school) talk to the child about things that have happened, or what he/she has been doing. Ask the parent/s to send in items that can act as a reminder for the child relating to what has been happening (e.g. tickets, a straw from McDonald's, cone from the park, swim hat). These can be used as prompts for story-writing and should help the child contribute at 'news time'.

General strategies

Strategies for speech sound development

Remember to respond to *what* the child says and not *how* it's been said!

Repetition is important

Repeat back words that have been said incorrectly (but correctly!). If a child says a word incorrectly (e.g. sun = 'dun', car = 'tar'), then repeat it back and model the word as it should be said. In this way, the child won't feel 'corrected' and will have an opportunity to listen and hear how the word is said, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'It's a tar.'
- ★ Adult: 'Yes, it's a *car*.'
- ★ Child: 'Look, the dun is in the ky.'
- ★ Adult: 'Yes, the *sun* is in the *sky*.'

Remember: don't insist that the child copies your model.

Children need to hear how a word should be said again and again before they are able to say the sound correctly. Provide plenty of opportunities for this to occur, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'Tan I have my tup?'
- ★ Adult: '*Can* you have your *cup*? Of course you can have your cup. Look, here's your cup. Would you like a cup of juice or a cup of milk?'

Offer choices

Allow the child to hear how a word is said the right way by offering choices of words. He/she can have a go at responding to your choice, but don't worry if the word isn't said correctly, just model it back again so the last thing heard is how the word *should* sound, e.g.

- ★ Child: 'I want a tup of tea.'
- ★ Adult: 'Do you want the *tup* or the *cup*?'
- ★ Child: 'Tup of tea.'
- ★ Adult: 'Ok, you want a *cup* of tea.'

Emphasise sounds

Emphasise the correct sound in words, and try to keep sentences slow, clear and simple. Sometimes children with unclear speech can talk too quickly, as well as having difficulty with pronouncing words correctly. Rather than telling them to slow down, model how they should talk by slowing your own speech, and emphasising the correct sounds. Also, keep sentences simple when you are working on sound production, e.g.

- ★ Child (quickly): 'The tar is in the darage.'
- ★ Adult: 'Oh yes, *car* is in the *garage*. Should I put this *car* in the box or in the *garage*?'

Emphasise the target sounds and slow down talking. Remember to stress the target sounds in your *own* speech.

Some children find it helpful to see the key sound written down. You can draw attention to it when you are sharing stories and poems. You can highlight the key sounds when the child is writing too, if appropriate.

Praise

Motivation will encourage the child to communicate. The best way to do this is to praise the child and tell him/her why he/she has done well, e.g.

- ★ Adult: ‘Good boy, I liked the way you put a nice “ssss” sound at the beginning of that word.’

Use mime and gesture

If the child struggles to get his/her message across, encourage him/her to mime, gesture, show you, draw, etc. Ask questions (e.g. ‘Are you telling me about X?’, ‘Is this about the game we played yesterday?’).

Sound awareness skills (phonological awareness)

Consider the child’s sound awareness skills. More help may be needed to learn:

- ★ Syllable structure.
- ★ Identifying beginning sounds.
- ★ Listening for sounds in the middle and ends of words.
- ★ Rhyme.
- ★ Blending sounds.
- ★ Listening for the difference between sounds (discrimination).

Home–school diary

A picture and/or written diary can help everyone involved (both at home and at school) talk to the child about things that have happened, or what he/she has been doing. If a child is particularly difficult to understand, a home–school diary can be very useful to cue you into what the child might be talking about.

General strategies

Strategies for developing attention and listening

Being able to attend to a task is a learned skill. It is described in some detail in the *WellComm Handbook*. Children may present with a short attention span and/or difficulties with sitting and waiting.

A short attention span

This describes a child who can engage with you or an activity but for a briefer time than would be expected for his/her age. The child has a delay in the development of attention skills. Difficulties can present as flitting from one activity to another.

Another go

The aim would be to build up the time that the child can attend to an activity. With activities that require a 'go' or a 'turn', as you see attention begin to wane, say things like 'one more page' (for reading) or 'one more teddy' (if sorting different colour bears into pots). In this way, try to extend the child's attention just a little each time.

Reward the desired behaviour

Children may be at an age when explicit rewards will help (e.g. 'If you do these three things, then you get a sticker'). You can adapt the number of items you expect to be done according to the level of the child you are working with. Perhaps they can do one thing before they want to move on, or perhaps four. As always, aim to extend the child's attention by just a little each time.

Understanding 'stop' and when a task is finished

Another way to extend attention is to use something to show when the child can stop (e.g. a giant egg timer or a red traffic-light picture on a page of work to show 'stop here'). You could show a reward after this (e.g. a picture of a favourite activity).

It is also important that the child knows when the task (if it is a specific task like sorting items into categories) is finished. With a jigsaw puzzle, for example, seeing the picture helps the child understand what he/she needs to achieve. Many children benefit from being shown what the end result should be – so that they can take responsibility for their own learning through a given task.

Children that fidget or grab items

Some children cannot resist picking up items and fiddling with them rather than listening (to you) and carrying out a task. There are a number of things you can do to help them sit and wait:

Let children look first

Let the child play a little to get used to handling the items. Name them as they are handled or comment on what the child is doing. Then ...

Reinforce 'good sitting'

Demonstrate what you want the child to do and then encourage good sitting, by saying something like 'feet on the floor', 'bottom on the chair', 'hands on the table', 'that's good sitting!' Reward the behaviour of good sitting in itself. Some children respond very quickly to these prompts, especially if you make your praise extremely enthusiastic. You could reward visually with stickers or a chart of some sort.

Give physical help using hand over hand

If necessary, place your hand on top of the child's. No force is necessary. Or it may be that the child is able to keep his/her hands on the table but is too quick to reach for items. In this case, simply putting a hand in front of the child's hands while you give an instruction may be enough.

Shared or joint attention

This is the skill of sharing or engaging attention with another person and for long enough for communication to take place. Some children can seem to be in a 'world of their own'. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder often have difficulties in this area.

Watch

Usually the role of the practitioner is to lead an activity and teach the child some knowledge or a skill. Instead, let *the child* choose an activity (the adult may sensibly control the number of activities the child can choose, or get one out at a time from an out-of-reach shelf). It doesn't matter whether or not the child plays with the items in a way that you recognise. Your role is to wait and watch what the *child* does. Then *you* can copy what *he/she* does or says.

Physical space

A point to consider here is that children vary in how much they tolerate an adult nearby and/or how much they can be copied. As you move towards a child, notice at what moment he/she 'rejects' you by turning away, showing distress or moving away. The aim is to reach the point where your presence is tolerated so that you can carry out the mirroring activities.

Copy

Look to see if the child notices that he/she has been copied. Wait – the child may look at you then. In time, the child may anticipate that you are going to copy and actually do something to make that happen! These are fundamental building blocks for all communication and learning and can't be underestimated.

N.B. The same skills are seen in early interaction games such as 'Peek a Boo'. In these games, the child gets used to the idea that Mummy or Daddy repeats an action (e.g. revealing themselves from behind their hands and saying 'boo'). Children anticipate what is going to happen and watch and wait for it. The same is true for 'Incy Wincy Spider' and 'Tickly under There!'

Turn-taking

At some point you may feel the time has come for you to initiate a new action (e.g. when a child is *waiting* for you to do something to copy). The new action might resemble an action of the child's but be a variation (e.g. he/she claps hands and you clap a hand against your leg. If he/she copies you then you have really achieved the goal!). You can start taking turns doing actions for the other to copy.

Not for distribution

General strategies

Strategies for developing fluency

When you identify that a child has a stammer, as in all good educational practice, it is important that the parent/s are aware of the strategies you are planning to use to work with the child. Most speech and language therapists consider dysfluency a priority and will endeavour to see a child as soon as possible. If you are in any doubt about a child's fluency, make a referral to the local service so that you can act on the advice given. The British Stammering Association's website (www.stammering.org) has many pages of advice for children of different age ranges and for people who come into contact with children who are dysfluent.

Younger children

Many young children speak dysfluently at times, especially when they are under some pressure to communicate effectively. There is no exact point at which normal dysfluency becomes stammering though there are features which can differentiate between the two extremes. These guidelines are taken from advice given by the Stammering Association:

- Normal dysfluencies are usually *relaxed* repetitions, often of *whole words* either at the beginning of a phrase or when the child is thinking of how to finish a sentence. These may be more marked when the child is very tired, excited, upset or nervous.
- There is a greater risk of a stammer developing when the child frequently gets stuck on words, prolonging or repeating *part of the words* or putting excess effort into finishing them. It is also worrying when the child seems aware of and upset by the dysfluency.

There can be much variation from day to day and in differing situations. Therefore, it is probably best to 'play safe'. First, discuss the child's speech with the parent/s to find out if the same difficulties are apparent at home; and if so, discuss whether the parent/s wish to see a speech and language therapist. Then, consider the following simple ways that the parent/s and early years practitioners and/or teachers can reduce communicative pressure on young children:

- Slow down your rate of talking to convey to *all* children that there is plenty of time. Speaking slowly oneself is likely to help the dysfluent child without drawing attention to the stammering by asking the child to slow down.
- Try to get on the same level as the child, both in the physical sense and by speaking in language that can be easily understood.
- Reduce the number of questions that you ask. If you need information from a very dysfluent child and are fairly sure of the content, then try to give alternatives (e.g. 'Did it happen in class or in the playground?'). Questions about current work can be phrased as alternatives to the benefit of other reticent children and those with difficulties in formulating sentences.

- Comments upon the emotion or events that are causing the increased dysfluency help the child to feel understood (e.g. 'I can see that you're very cross'). Comments on specific words or sounds are not helpful.
- There are some speaking situations that facilitate fluency. For example: speaking in tandem with another, reciting familiar lists like the days of the week or counting, singing, speaking familiar words with a strong rhythm as in nursery rhymes or poetry, speaking with actions. Sometimes acting allows the child to speak confidently and fluently. Such activities may increase fluency without awareness of any special attention. In general, familiar material that is well within a child's level of ability reduces the communicative stress.
- Other things that reduce fluency include being interrupted or hurried, competing to speak, fear of the consequences of what's been said, expressing complex ideas, using relatively new vocabulary and sentence structures. Keeping a record of what increases and decreases fluency should give some ideas about how to help a particular child.
- Many children have episodes of easy talking. These times provide opportunities for developing oral communication skills. Dysfluent patches are a time to consolidate current achievements in both speaking and reading.
- Some children may need extra help when learning to read, since uncertainty about particular words may precipitate stammering and the child may have a particular difficulty with some phonics. Varied reading strategies are needed to assist fluency by giving the child something constructive to try when faced with a new or difficult word.
- Children of all ages tend to be more fluent when speaking about a personal interest. They may also be helped by demonstrating what they've made or discovered or by using visual aids to support their speaking.
- Try not to feel anxious yourself when a child is having problems. If you can remain calm, kind and approachable, the chances are you will be able to support the child through the difficulties in much the same way as you help with all the other crises that are a part of the usual school day. If *you* are anxious this may fuel the child's anxiety, making things harder for you both.

Older children

It may be quite clear, however, that a particular child has gone well beyond the early hesitant stage of normal dysfluency and is definitely stammering. The child may stammer with obvious physical tension or may try to conceal the severity of the problem by avoiding particular sounds, words or situations or by attempting to hide his/her mouth while speaking. If this is the case, again, discuss the difficulty with the parent/s, so that your approach may be consistent with theirs. If the child is attending for speech and language therapy, then the therapist can guide you about a particular child's problem. Whenever possible, discuss any specific difficulties with the child and plan with him/her some participation in oral work. In general, the aim is for the child to participate as fully as possible yet without feeling under constant pressure from fear of stammering and ridicule.

Answering questions

- When asking the class questions, try not to keep the child who stammers waiting too long for a turn as this may increase anxiety and hence stammering. Discuss with the child how best to deal with any class questions and discussion sessions.
- Children who stammer may need more time to express their ideas, so during question and answer activities it is helpful if the teacher slows his or her own rate of speech so signalling to all children that there is no need to hurry.
- Children can rely on stammering to cover up lack of knowledge and so should be encouraged to speak to their teacher when they don't understand or know something.
- Children often lose eye contact when stammering, so it's helpful if teachers don't look away but give the same eye contact as they would if speaking to a child who is fluent.
- Finishing off sentences is usually unhelpful as it reduces self-confidence and increases frustration, especially if the person chooses words different from those intended by the stammering child.
- Where daily registration is causing problems, alternative approaches can be discussed with the child.

Reading aloud

- When there are opportunities to read aloud in front of the class, the child who stammers may wish to read in unison with another child as this will help fluency.
- A classroom policy that encourages a relaxed reading pace may help the child who stammers as well as slow or hesitant readers.
- It may be necessary to work gradually towards reading in front of the class. Reading alone to the teacher or other adults can be followed by reading in small groups. When the child feels ready, reading to the class can be attempted.

Individual attention

- A child who stammers may find it very difficult to approach teachers, either with concerns about work or to be sociable. If the teacher makes time to see the child on an individual basis now and again, this may help to ease communication.
- Failures with speaking can overshadow all other achievements and lead to low self-esteem. The teacher's celebration of success or competence in other areas can be encouraging, as well as directing the focus away from stammering.
- Perhaps the most important thing is that the child doesn't come to believe that stammering is unspeakably bad. Careful, sensitive discussion of difficulties and strengths can do much to reduce the need to hide the stammering and, paradoxically, this can lead to increased fluency. The harder the child tries to prevent stammering, the more severe the stammering becomes. The less concerned he/she is about speaking, the more fluent

they are likely to be. There is a delicate balance between avoiding the pain of stammering and encouraging a child to take some risks with speaking. It is unlikely that fluency will be experienced without some risks. However, the child should be involved in deciding when to play safe and when to be more adventurous.

Teasing

One of the things that makes stammering so painful is that it occurs in social contexts. There is no way of keeping it to yourself. Many children who stammer feel ashamed of their speech and so can be very sensitive to teasing. Open discussion between teacher and the child may encourage a more light-hearted response to any teasing. It is best to deal with teasing about stammering not as an individual problem but rather include it in discussions and activities about teasing and bullying in general (e.g. as in social and emotional aspects of learning sessions).

If teasing can be dealt with *before* it becomes a problem, then this is always preferable to trying to deal with it after a child has suffered the humiliation of being victimised. A stammering child with few friends is more vulnerable to teasing. Anything that may help such a child make and keep friends is worth trying.

Speech and language therapy

The current emphasis in schools on speaking and listening skills can put extra pressure on a child who stammers and so liaison with a speech and language therapist is recommended. A therapist may also help if stammering is interfering with a child's ability to succeed in oral assessments or examinations. The therapist may not work directly with young children but rather through the parent/s. Many therapists visit teachers in school to discuss children who have communication difficulties.

Not for distribution

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A Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years: Revised Edition.

The Big Book of Ideas offers over 150 practical intervention activities to help build children's language skills. It can be used as an integral part of [Wellcomm: A Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years: Revised Edition](#) or as a stand-alone resource.

When used in conjunction with the Wellcomm Screening Tool, **The Big Book of Ideas** provides a range of ideas for intervention that can be customised and targeted to meet individual language learning needs. Practitioners are signposted towards the most appropriate activities, thus ensuring crucial communication skills are developed and enhanced.

Suitable for use with children at any age or stage of development from 6 months to 6 years, the activities within **The Big Book of Ideas** are appropriate for use by any professional working in the early years. They are all:

- ★ Fully photocopiable
- ★ Easy-to-use and jargon-free
- ★ Designed to be fun, motivating and engaging for children
- ★ Ideal for sharing with parents/carers to support children's development at home
- ★ Fully adaptable, including advice on how to differentiate the activities by making them easier or harder

"Every early years setting should have a copy! The Big Book of Ideas presents a wealth of practical, fun activities that can be tailored to children with a range of abilities."

- **Heather Price, Acting Head of Profession, Speech and Language Therapy, Hertfordshire.**

"A really useful resource! Invaluable for professionals and parents working with young children to develop speech, language and communication skills."

- **Lorna Smart, Speech and Language Therapist, East Cheshire.**