Early understanding

Developing your child’s understanding

Understanding involves listening and taking in information. For young children this also involves making a link between the words that they hear and the objects and actions that the words represent. Children must understand before they learn to talk. Quite often children understand a gesture before a word. This is a very important part of speech and language development.

Ways to help your child develop their understanding:

• Gain your child’s attention before you speak to them e.g. call their name or touch them gently on the shoulder
• Get down to their level so your child can see and hear you easily
• Encourage them to look at you when you speak to them
• Use a gentle and interesting voice
• Tell your child what things are called
• Use pointing and gestures if your child is having difficulties understanding
• Comment on what your child is doing (e.g. daily routines and play)
• Introduce new words and use these often as children learn through repetition.
• Give short simple instructions
  • e.g. ‘put the bricks away now’
  • ‘go to the toilet’ (rather than long complicated instruction such as ‘I want you to go to the toilet so put the bricks away’)

Activities to develop understanding:

• Talk about the everyday things that you and your child are doing together e.g. bath time, shopping etc
• Play together with real objects, large and miniature toys
• Play along side your child following their lead and commenting on the things they are doing
• Sing songs and action rhymes
• Share books together talking about the pictures

NOTE: once your child understands lots of object names and action words you can develop their understanding further by describing and explaining so ‘remember don’t just name, describe and explain’ e.g. ‘Daddy’s hungry he is eating a big apple’.

For further information please contact: Department of Speech and Language Therapy
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Adapted from NHS Blackburn with Darwen – Speech and Language Therapy Department
Production date: June 2010   Author: Department of Speech and Language Therapy   Code: 0610228