



How to Help Children With Receptive Language Difficulties

○ What is 'Receptive Language?'

This is concerned with how we *understand* what is said to us. Some of the skills needed to understand spoken language include:

- an ability to listen and attend to the person speaking,
- an ability to remember what has been said,
- an understanding of what the words mean,
- an understanding of the grammatical rules of words and sentences.

○ General Strategies

- Decrease environmental noises and distractions as far as possible, e.g. close windows and doors to reduce noise from the playground/other classrooms, turn off any computers not being used, avoid having tables cluttered with objects which may be a distraction
- Consider where to position a child to provide optimum support, e.g. are they close to the board? And you? Are they away from distractions?

• ***Cue them in***

Always gain the child's attention before speaking to them by using some or all of the following strategies

- Gaining eye contact,
- Saying their name (verbal prompt)
- Touching their arm (physical prompt)

• ***Use lots of methods to get your message across***

Try to use any additional cues you can to help children understand, including;

- Non-verbal cues - actions, pointing, gestures, facial expressions
- Visual cues - diagrams, pictures, symbols, objects
- Signing
- Write key parts of the lesson in brief on the board



- ***Specific Strategies***
 - Use different coloured pens and visual tools e.g. spider diagrams or mind maps to help the child visualise, understand and remember things more thoroughly.
 - Signal topic changes clearly - a visual timetable can help illustrate this.
 - Make expectations chronological and explicit, eg.
 - ✓ first find the next clean page.
 - ✓ then copy the table from the board
 - ✓ then measure the 5 objects
 - ✓ then write the measurements in the boxes.
 - Reinforce achievement and progress.
 - Try and incorporate learning breaks into lesson
 - Identify and explain the key vocabulary and make sure it is reinforced
 - Review past information before you introduce new information

- ***Say less***
 - Keep what you are saying short and simple - only say what you need to say, don't go "round the houses"
 - When giving longer instructions avoid overloading the child with information by breaking the instruction down into simpler steps, and saying what has to be done first, next etc.
 - OR try to give one bit of the instruction at a time

- ***Say what you mean***
 - Say things in a straightforward way e.g. "paul, come and line up" rather than "I'm still waiting for someone"
 - Avoid or explain sarcasm and jokes

- ***Go slow***
 - Talk slowly, but be natural - the child may need longer to process information
 - Give the child plenty of time to understand by inserting pauses in appropriate places

- ***Use Stress in your speech***
 - **Emphasise** and **repeat** important words or information,
 - Give the child enough time to understand

- ***Use the Child's experience***
 - Relate new information and vocabulary to the child's own experience before trying to generalise, eg. 'gravity' - how does this affect them, 'electricity' - *what do they like to use that needs electricity.*

- ***Monitor the child's reaction***
 - Check to see if the child has understood - look at their facial expression to see if they appear to have understood or ask them to say what they are going to do.
 - Build on whatever they have understood
 - Where possible encourage the child to monitor whether they are understanding a lesson and teach them how to seek appropriate clarification if needed e.g. "Can you tell me again?", "I don't know what..... means?"
 - Actively praise children asking questions.
 - Ensure plenty of opportunities for small group discussion and work
 - Consider visual / colour coded systems to say whether they understand / need help or not, eg. a traffic light system.

- **Activities**
 - Play Barrier Games to emphasise the need to listen and understand.
 - Use the Blank Levels (detailed in the Elklan Training).
 - Help with memory by playing games such as 'I went to market and bought ...'
 - Use Mind Maps (Tony Buzan / Elklan) to help teach curriculum vocabulary.

- **Resources**
 - **Black Sheep Press Ltd.**
Registered Office: Middleton, Cowling, Keighley, W. Yorks,
BD22 0DQ, United Kingdom
Phone: 01535 631 346
www.blacksheeppress.co.uk
 - Living Language, Anne Locke, ISBN-10: 0700509968
 - Rhodes to Language, Anna Rhodes, STASS Publications,
www.stasspublication.co.uk
 - 50 Quick Play Listening Games, www.winslowresources.com

○ *Useful Websites*

- www.speakupsalford.nhs.uk This is the website for the SRFT Speech and Language Therapy department in Salford. It contains further information and advice.
- www.rcslt.org This is the website for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.
- www.talkingpoint.org.uk This is a useful website for parents and teachers. It contains information and advice.
- www.afasic.org.uk This is a parent led organisation that offers information and advice. There are areas on the website for professionals also.

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