

Supporting Understanding



Research has shown that parents are not responsible for children's speech or language difficulties. However, parents can make a big difference to their child's language development by changing the way they talk and listen to their child.

Here are some ways you can help:

Slow down: If you slow your own speech down your child will find it easier to keep up. The best way to do this is to leave extra pauses between phrases.

Keep it simple: Use simple words or explain as you go along, e.g. 'Astronaut... that means a person who goes into space.'

Keep it short: Less really is more when it comes to language. Lots of children with language difficulties find it hard to remember what they hear. By keeping instructions and talking short your child will find it easier to follow what you are saying.

One bit at a time: If you are asking your child to do a few things try to break them down into single steps. Give your child time to complete the first step before giving him or her the next bit; e.g. 'Get your brush' (give time for child to go and get the hairbrush), 'Now brush your hair'.

Repeat repeat repeat: Your child needs to hear instructions and words more than once. It takes a lot of practice to learn a new word.

Make links clear: An important part of learning language is the ability to make links between words and ideas. Children with language difficulties often find this hard. Try to explain links as you go along. Talk about things that go together, talk about similarities and differences between objects; e.g. when preparing an apple talk about the features of the apple, how it is the same as other fruit and how it is different from other fruit.

Check understanding: Children with language difficulties can be very clever at hiding their difficulties. Ask your child to show you or tell you what words mean or what he or she has to do. Avoid asking if he or she has understood as your child will probably say yes even when he or she hasn't understood.