

## Speech, Language and Communication 0-1 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could do

- When the baby is close to you, look at them and say their name. Make eye contact and encouraging noises and wait for them to react  
*You'll know this is working when: the baby looks when they hear their name*
- Name the things young babies show interest in e.g. when babies point to or hold up an object tell them what it is
- Talk to babies about what you are doing and what is happening. Allow them to hold the objects and involve them in doing the activity e.g. during nappy changing, offer a clean nappy for the baby to hold as you name it. This means that the baby has the chance to see and touch the nappy and learn that the word goes with that object
- Use actions to support your words e.g. waving when you say 'bye bye', holding your arms open when you ask if they want to be picked 'up?', clapping for celebration
- Speak simply; you may find yourself using a higher pitched 'sing-song' voice and baby words, which is natural for this stage of the child's development and helps them to focus on what you're saying
- During play with baby, you can begin to ask them to find parts of their body or familiar people in the room e.g. 'where's your nose?', 'where's daddy'

## Speech, Language and Communication 0-1 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could provide

- Let babies see and hear the sequence of actions you go through as you carry out familiar routines
- Provide resources that stimulate babies' interests such as a shiny bell, baby books and mirrors
- Invite parents who speak languages other than English to contribute to labelling your resources, toys and books with the words from their home languages
- When you sing nursery rhymes and songs, help babies to understand the words by singing slowly and using gestures and actions that go with the words in the songs

## Speech, Language and Communication 1-2 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could do

- Name the things young children show an interest in e.g. when children point to an object tell them what it is

*You'll know this is working when: your child responds to what you've said by looking at you and holding it up to show you*

- Talk to children about what you are doing and what is happening. Allow them to hold the objects and involve them in doing the activity e.g. during nappy changing, offer a clean nappy for the child to hold as you name it. This means that the child has to chance to see and touch the nappy and learn that the word goes with that object

*You'll know this is working when: the child begins to show an understanding of that word in its context e.g. when you use the word 'nappy' they look towards it*

- Name things that you pass to the child using a simple sentence, repeating two or three times with a little bit of emphasis, so the child can gradually link the word to the object. This can work even better when you pass the items at eye level so you are both looking at the object and each other at the same time.

*You'll know this is working when: your child begins to show an understanding of that word in its context e.g. when you use the word 'here's your... milk' or 'coat' they look towards it*

- Within play activities encourage the child to find objects that you name.

*You'll know this is working when: the child can select a familiar object by name or go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group with a minimum of three objects (e.g. book, ball, teddy)*

- Use action words to talk about what the child is doing, so the child can gradually link the word to the action e.g. 'you're jumping', 'you're drinking'

*You'll know this is working when: the child begins to show an understanding of the action words in context e.g. they can show you they understand your simple sentences within pretend play - 'brush dolly', 'feed monkey', 'push car'*

## Speech, Language and Communication 1-2 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could provide

- Let children see and hear the sequence of actions you go through as you carry out familiar routines
- Provide resources that stimulate young children's interests so that they will be motivated to explore and play and hear the words you are using alongside them
- Invite parents who speak languages other than English to contribute to labelling your resources, toys and books with the words from their home languages
- When you sing nursery rhymes and songs, help children to understand the words by singing slowly and using gestures and actions that go with the words in the songs
- Plan play activities and provide resources which encourage young children to engage in symbolic play e.g. putting a baby to bed
- Use pictures, books, real objects, gestures and signs alongside your words i.e. use a Total Communication approach which backs up what you are saying with something visual

## Speech, Language and Communication 2-3 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could do

- Repeat the words that the child says, adding an extra one or two words e.g. child points out the window and says 'dar' and you say 'car... mummy's car', with a little bit of emphasis. For an older child - if the child says 'big car', you say 'big blue car'. This helps the child link the new words to the objects and actions that they already know.

*You'll know this is working when: your child begins to show an understanding of words that describe objects and situations (e.g. big/little)*

- Use talk to describe what children are doing by providing a running commentary focusing on objects and actions within your normal environment. This allows you to match the child's actions, thoughts or feelings with words:

Use simple phrases (2 to 3 words) and use plenty of pauses - this makes sure that the child isn't overloaded and has time to think about what you've said

*You'll know this is working when: the child turns and looks at you, involves you in their play and responds with gestures or words as they begin to understand more of the words you're using*

- Within play activities encourage the child to find objects that you name and follow simple instructions including naming words (e.g. bucket), actions words (e.g. pour) and describing words (e.g. big)

*You'll know this is working when: the child can understand more complex sentences that includes listening and responding to two or more main words e.g. 'pour the sand in the big bucket'*

- Keep a balance to your commenting/directing - use more words to describe rather than asking the child lots of questions e.g. instead of asking 'what's that?', use 'here's a...', 'you've got a...',

This can feel unnatural in the beginning especially if the child only tends to talk in response to questions. However, keep going!

*You'll know this is working when: the child is more engaged and responds to your comments*

## Speech, Language and Communication 2-3 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could provide

- Photographs of children doing actions in the setting, to provide a practical resource to support the child's understanding of action words
- Plan play activities and provide resources which encourage young children to engage in symbolic play with longer sequences of events e.g. bathing baby, putting baby to bed and reading a story to it
- Use pictures, books, real objects, gestures and signs alongside your words i.e. use a Total Communication approach which backs up what you are saying with something visual
- Include things which excite young children's curiosity, which provide motivating opportunities for children to tune into the words you are using during play
- Provide activities such as cooking, where talk is used to anticipate or initiate what children will be doing, e.g. 'we need some eggs, let's see if we can find some in here'

## Speech, Language and Communication 3-4 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could do

- Make sure you get the child's full looking and listening attention before you speak to them or give instructions
  - If you need a child to focus on what you are saying, you may need to interrupt their attention from what they are doing e.g. get down to their level, touch their shoulder
  - Say the child's name first, at the beginning of what you say so they know it is directed at them right from the start

- Repeat instructions, breaking them down into their separate parts and in the order that they should happen - 'wash your hands... now you can have snack', 'put on your coat... now you can play outside'

*You'll know this is working when: the child can respond to instructions involving two parts, without you breaking it down first*

- Within play encourage the child to put objects in different places using location words (e.g. under, on top, behind) and to find objects in response to you using those words

*You'll know this is working when: the child can understand and respond to you by carrying out an action or selecting a matching picture or object e.g. 'put the cat behind the box'*

- Put some everyday objects into a box on your lap, describe one of the objects to the child - tell them about what it does, it's size, shape, colour and texture as well as where you find it. Ask the child to tell you when they know what it is. When they guess correctly, bring out the object so they can see they are right. Now give them the same information again to reinforce their understanding

*You'll know this is working when: the child is able to understand the use of objects (e.g. 'what do we use for cutting things?')*

- During play or book sharing ask a few 'why' and 'how' questions such as 'why did the boat tip over' - if the child does not respond, model how to answer the questions e.g. 'I wonder if the boat tipped over because the animals were too heavy'.

- For additional activity ideas, see the 'Brave The Bear' activity cards within the Chatting With Children pack available from  
I CAN

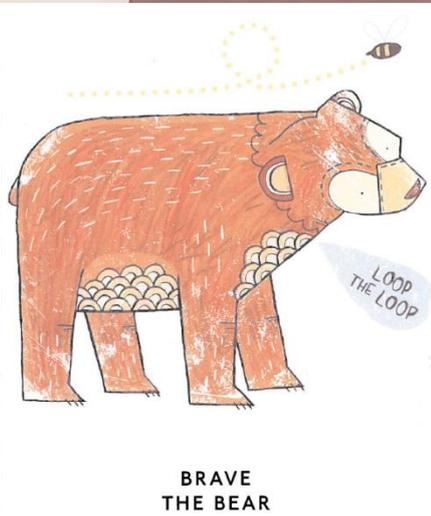
## Speech, Language and Communication 3-4 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could provide

- For additional activity ideas, see the 'Brave The Bear' activity cards within the Chatting With Children pack available from the I CAN website. These can be played individually or in small groups  
<http://icancharity.org.uk/resources/chatting-children>
- Provide practical and motivating experiences that encourage children to ask and respond to questions e.g. explaining pulleys or wet and dry sand
- Include props when book sharing, such as pictures, puppets and objects. This helps a child to understand and remember what you have said

*Understanding what is said*  
**KATIE SAYS...**



**BRAVE THE BEAR**

without making a mistake?

listen carefully and follow the curriculum and at home.

, e.g. "Touch your toes" do what's asked.

that the child gets a the wrong thing and o – this makes the

Ask the child to do different actions, depending on their level of understanding of words and sentences. You can also introduce new vocabulary, such as "Rub your elbow" and "Point to your ankle".

#### **TOO DIFFICULT?**

Make this easier by doing all – or part – of the same action yourself. This way, the child has a visual clue to help them know what to do.

#### **TOO EASY?**

To make the game more challenging, increase the length of the instructions. Or join several together, and see if the child can still follow them.

## Speech, Language and Communication 4-5 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could do

- Repeat instructions, breaking them down into their separate parts and in the order that they should happen - 'wash your hands... now you can have snack', 'put on your coat... now you can play outside'  
*You'll know this is working when: the child can respond to instructions involving two parts, without you breaking it down first*
- Help children to:
  - Identify patterns with children e.g. during book sharing discuss with the children what generally happens to 'good' and 'wicked' characters at the end of stories
  - Draw conclusions e.g. model to the children 'look the sky has gone dark... I wonder what's going to happen... maybe it's going to rain'
  - Explain effect e.g. 'the boat has sunk... I wonder why... it sank because it was too heavy'
  - Predict e.g. 'what might happen next?'
  - Speculate e.g. 'does the zoo keeper know that the gorilla has gotten out of the cage... I don't think he does because he's still asleep'  
*You'll know this is working when: the child can understand and respond appropriately without your model first*
- For additional activity ideas, see the 'Brave The Bear' activity cards within the Chatting With Children pack available from  
I CAN

## Speech, Language and Communication 4-5 years

### Understanding Language

#### What adults could provide

- For additional activity ideas, see the 'Brave The Bear' activity cards within the Chatting With Children pack available from the I CAN website. These can be played individually or in small groups

<http://icancharity.org.uk/resources/chatting-children>



**BRAVE  
THE BEAR**

*Understanding what is said*

#### BUILD A TOWER LIKE MINE

##### THE AIM OF THE GAME

Making identical towers.

##### LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding complex instructions without visual clues is difficult. This activity helps prepare for later in school when instructions get more complex, with no visual clues.

##### HOW TO DO IT

Find two sets of identical bricks with eight to ten in each set. (Ensure that the colours and sizes of the bricks in each set are the same – if one set has a big blue brick and a small yellow brick, so should the other.)

Give one set of bricks to the child, and hide your set of bricks behind a barrier, e.g. under a blanket or towel, so the child can't see them. Explain that you're going to make a tower; and that you want them to make one the same. As you build your tower, tell the child which bricks go on next. Continue until there are five or six bricks in the tower.

Reveal your tower – is the child's the same? (Instead of bricks you can thread beads or use a pegboard.)

##### TOO DIFFICULT?

Have fewer bricks in each set to choose from, or make a smaller tower. Help the child find each brick as soon as you put it on your tower. If the child doesn't yet know colour-words, use the same coloured bricks in different sizes, e.g. "I'm using a big brick" or "Now, I'm putting a small one on".

##### TOO EASY?

Talk about two or three bricks at a time. Offer less help and encourage the child to listen and follow the instructions for themselves. Or give more information about each brick, e.g. "I'm starting with a small blue brick and then a big red one".