

How to...

Develop a child's understanding of instructions containing 2 key words

2 key word level instructions are instructions where there are choices for two of the words, the child needs to understand the meaning of two of the words in the instruction to be able to follow it correctly. For example:

“Give the **banana** to **teddy**” is a 2 key word level instruction if there are a choice of food items (e.g. an apple and a banana), and a choice of characters (e.g. a teddy and a doll).



The following activities can be used to practise following instructions at this level:

1. Tea party

Find a teddy and a doll, or choose two characters that the child likes (e.g. Superman and Spiderman). Have a selection of food items available. Give instructions like:

“Give teddy a plate” “Give Spiderman a banana” “Give some cake to the doll”

You could also give similar instructions at snack times/meal times e.g. “Give mummy a bowl”. Remember, you need to have choices available for the underlined words for this to be a 2 key word level instruction e.g. there would need to be more than one person, and more than one item to choose from.

2. Animal actions

Collect a range of toy animals. Encourage the child to make the animals perform actions e.g.

“Make elephant jump” “Make cat sleep” “Make tiger eat”

3. Tidy up time

Use tidy up time as an opportunity to practise following instructions like:

“Put dolly on the chair” “Put the book on the table” “Put the brick in the box”

Note: you will need to change where the items go each time, otherwise the child may rely on their memory of ‘where things go’, and won’t need to focus on the language you are using.

4. Post Boxes

Make two post boxes out of old shoeboxes – you could choose characters that the child likes e.g. from a TV programme, or choose their favourite animals. Cut a hole in the boxes to make a mouth.

Collect a range of small food items, or pictures of food items. Give instructions like:

“Feed the cake to Peppa Pig” “Feed the sausages to Thomas”

Top tips for working on 2 key word level instructions:

- Check that the child understands the vocabulary you are using first e.g. if you are working on instructions containing actions, then check they understand the actions individually first
- Avoid looking or pointing at the items, so that the child needs to rely on their listening
- If the child finds it difficult to follow instructions at this level:
 - Use gestures or signs to support their understanding of the key words
 - Model the activity first
 - Repeat the instruction – if they continue to find it difficult, demonstrate what to do
 - Make sure you give praise for trying
 - If they continue to find it difficult, step the instruction down by removing one of the choices e.g. if the instruction is “**Feed the cake to Peppa Pig**”, only have a choice of food items available, so that this becomes a one key word level instruction - the only choice is which item of food to give to Peppa.

Next steps:

Once a child is consistently able to follow instructions containing 2 key words, you can move on to working on instructions containing 3 key words.

Additional information:

For further information please contact Paediatric.services@acecic.nhs.uk or call ACE paediatric services on 01206 588100

Additional resources:

<https://www.talkingpoint.org.uk>

<https://www.gi-assessment.co.uk/products/wellcomm/>

<https://www.elklan.co.uk/under-5s/early-language-builders>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

<https://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/sentence-builder-expressive-skills/>

<http://www.clear-resources.co.uk/ClearProductsPage.html>

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/splingos-language-universe/id457526530>

<http://www.stass.co.uk/publications/language-steps>

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