Development of understanding spoken language

Information for parents and carers
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<th>Approximate age</th>
<th>Description of understanding</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Zero months     | • Answers to any sound - spoken or non-spoken  
• Answers to different tones and emotion in voices |          |
| Six months      | • Understands words said as part of a normal sequence of events | ‘Wave bye-bye’ |
| 12 months       | • Understands key words in familiar situations - this is often called situational understanding | ‘After tea’, ‘Bedtime’ |
| 18 months       |          |          |
| Two years       | • At any time can understand names of missing objects whenever they are used in familiar sentences | At any time of day:  
‘find your shoes’ |
| Two and a half years | • Can link two named objects  
• Can make out objects from description of their use | ‘Put your toys in the box’ |
| Three years | • Understands simple actions and things not linked to themselves  
• Understands the use of colour, size, place and negation (no and not) when used in simple sentences  
• Begins to understand ‘time’ when talking about the immediate past and future | ‘What flies in the sky?’  
‘Which animal has big ears?’ |
| Four years | • Joins up to three key words in a sentence when there are no other clues to help  
• Begins to understand tense, shown by change to verbs | ‘Give the big cup to Anne’ |
| Five years plus | • Follows simple stories  
• Understands most straightforward sentences  
• Still needs helpful references for much of the time | ‘The horse is jumping over the fence’ |
|  | • Begins to understand more difficult sentences  
• Increasing understanding of words will help speech develop. | ‘The man is chased by the dog.’  
‘The book is bigger than the pencil’ |
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