

Development of understanding spoken language

Information for parents and carers



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Approximate age	Description of understanding	Examples
Zero months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers to any sound - spoken or non-spoken Answers to different tones and emotion in voices 	
Six months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands words said as part of a normal sequence of events 	‘Wave bye-bye’
12 months 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands key words in familiar situations - this is often called situational understanding 	‘After tea’, ‘Bedtime’
Two years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can link two named objects Can make out objects from description of their use 	‘Put your toys in the box’

<p>Three years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>'What flies in the sky?'</p> <p>'Which animal has big ears?'</p>
<p>Four years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>'Give the big cup to Anne'</p>
<p>Five years plus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows simple stories • Understands most straightforward sentences • Still needs helpful references for much of the time 	<p>'The horse is jumping over the fence'</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to understand more difficult sentences • Increasing understanding of words will help speech develop. 	<p>'The man is chased by the dog!'</p> <p>The book is bigger than the pencil'</p>

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