



STRATEGIES TO HELP SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO HAVE

COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES

- Count up to 10 seconds to allow children time to process – this may seem an unnaturally long time but children often need this in order to:

- // Take in what has been said.
- // Process and understand specific concepts and words.
- // Put it with the rest of the instruction to be able to understand it.
- // Select the right words to respond.
- // Put them in the right order.
- // Speak them.

If we (when giving the instruction/sentence) try to rush, prompt or change what we say, this process has to start all over again!

- Support spoken language by using natural gesture.
- Give one instruction at a time, eg "wash hands" or 'chunk' instructions so children have time to process them eg "wash your hands [pause] and put your shoes on". This may feel unnatural but will allow the child time to process.
- Be aware, when using new vocabulary, that you may need to give a simple explanation, eg "Giant – that's a big, big man."
- Where possible use visual props to support what you are saying, eg story sacks, pictures, gesture, signs.
- Use facial expressions.
- Avoid idioms and sarcasm.
- Explain what is obvious.
- Use 'show me', or 'point to' rather than 'can you see?'
- If talking specifically to a child, use their name before giving the instruction.



- Ask them to repeat to an adult or peer what they have to do.
- Encourage children, as part of day-to-day situations, to be able to say 'I don't understand' or to ask for help – you can use visuals as well eg red/amber/green, thumbs up/thumbs down.
- Praise children for asking questions – use reward systems such as stickers for good questions.
- Don't assume vocabulary and concepts are understood, particularly when they are part of another topic eg first and last, beginning and end, prepositions.
- Be aware of concepts and vocabulary out of context eg bigger than/smaller than with regards to objects then numbers.
- Be aware of misinterpretations eg light = not dark, light = not heavy.
- Be careful of negatives – they are later to develop. It is more helpful to say what should be done rather than what shouldn't.
- Don't teach opposites together – teach the concept, then 'not' the concept, then the label.
- Discuss new vocabulary to support learning it eg what does it do, where do you find it etc.