

Follows two-part instructions

It is important for children to be able to follow instructions so that they can function effectively across different environments (e.g. home, nursery/school, when at the park etc). If a child struggles with following instructions this impacts on their ability to reach the desired 'purpose' or 'outcome' and thus complete tasks effectively.

Typical development

3 to 4 year olds will be learning to:	understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as: "Get your coat and wait at the door".
---------------------------------------	---

What can you do to improve a child's ability to follow an instruction?

- **Eye contact** - Get the child's visual attention before giving them an instruction.
- **Simple language** - Keep language simple and direct one key word if needed.
- **Assess** - Assess each child's level of understanding first.
- **Familiar routines** - you may start with instructions that are part of the child's daily routine at a one key word level before moving to two and three key word instructions
- **Break verbal instructions into parts** - Instead of "Go and get your wellies and your coat and go outside", say "Get your wellies." When the child has followed that instruction, say "Now get your coat" then "now you can go outside".
- **Process** - Give the child time to process the instruction (up to 10 seconds)
- **Repeat** - Repeat the instruction but repeat it exactly the same way you said it
- **'First/Then'** - Use this concept to help the child know what order they need to complete the command (e.g. "First get your jacket, then put on your shoes").
- **Clarify** - Encourage the child to ask for clarification if they forget part of the instruction or have trouble understanding what they need to do. Encourage them to ask for the command to be repeated or clarified (e.g. "Can you say that again please?").
- **Visual aids** - For example, photo's/pictures, gestures, Makaton, body language and facial expression) can be used to assist the child's comprehension and recall of the instruction.
- **Visual cues** - Can often be very useful to help the child to follow longer instructions as it provides them with something to refer back to if they are having difficulty remembering what they need to do. It also highlights the order in which they need to complete the instruction

Games that teach following instructions to pre-schoolers

- **Simon Says** - 'Simons says' is a fun game to play with a group of children. It teaches listening skills and encourages learning directions for kids. Keep the instructions very simple at first and gradually make them more challenging. Use your creativity to say out loud what Simon says!
- **Games with a purpose** - Ask children to perform ordinary tasks like putting away toys, handing out cups at snack time to their friends, getting a particular book for story times etc. Don't forget to praise the child when they follow the direction.
- **Games that teach listening skills** - To hone the child's listening skills, have them close their eyes and listen to different sounds carefully. You can use existing ambient sounds or make some yourself. Let them guess what the sounds are. Prompt them by giving clues.

Useful links

www.ican.org.uk – Children's communication charity I CAN's Talking Point gives practitioners, parents, and carers the information they need to help children develop their speaking and understanding skills. Good resources (some free, some you have to buy) but also has an advice line and a good one to follow on Facebook.

EY S&L Support is available from 8.30am till 4.00pm every Wednesday. Please email

Rebecca.skinner@ghc.nhs.uk.

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service is a countywide specialist service for children and young people aged 0 – 18 and their families and carers. <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/childrens-slt/>