

Memory and receptive language



Receptive language (or language comprehension) is our ability to understand information – spoken, written and in pictures. Children need to understand language before they can use it themselves. Working memory is our ability to remember information for a little while, and use that information. We use our working memory when following an instruction to get something from another room, when solving maths problems and when remembering a phone number as we dial it.

Here are some ways you can help your child understand language and use their working memory:

Ask your child to “look and listen”:

It is important to get your child's attention before giving them instructions.

Keep it short:

Use simple sentences when giving instructions.

Build:

Increase information as your child's understanding and memory increases. For example, if your child can follow one instruction, give them two: get your hat and your drink bottle.

Repeat:

Ask your child to repeat your instruction to ensure they have understood, and help them to remember it.

Talk and make comments:

Talk about things your child is interested in, and about what you are doing.

Here are some fun activities you and your child can do together:

Read books: Ask your child to find and point to pictures on the pages. Show them pictures by labelling and pointing to them in order to help them learn new words. Go over important parts of the story and ask questions to help them understand. Ask the child to 'read' (remember) the story back to you.

Play 'I Spy': Label and point to pictures on the pages of a book. Make it a game and see who can find the most pictures on the page. Make it harder by talking about basic concepts, such as asking your child to find the small key (or similar). You can also play 'I Spy' without the book and find objects around the house.

Puzzles: Have your child find specific pieces and answer questions about them. For example: "Find the car!" and "what noise does a car make?" Label all the puzzle pieces and think of others that could match. For example, if the puzzle is all about animals, think of other animals that were not included in the puzzle.



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Simon says: This game encourages your child to listen for 'Simon says' and then follow the direction. You can change the directions to the skill level of your child, and make it harder as you go. You can start with a basic direction such as "raise your hands". For a fun twist, you can even switch roles and have your child be Simon!

Go grocery shopping in the kitchen: Make a shopping list, including pictures if needed, and have your child go 'shopping'. Give directions such as, "get the cereal from the cupboard" or ask questions like, "where do we keep the milk?"

Play the game "I went shopping and I bought..." (the first person says an item like milk, then you take turns, adding another item each time).

Play: Play with your child and their toys! You can target action words, such as running, jumping or sleeping. Work on basic concepts like in, on and off. Follow your child's lead while being a good model for language. Encourage creativity through play! Make an obstacle course and give your child directions to follow, such as jump then crawl, or do three jumps then run to the wall.

Threading: Use coloured and shaped beads and give your child instructions to follow, such as "thread a red circle, then a blue square".

Matching: Gather some jar lids, stick on some foam craft shapes and play a simple game of lid matching. Place the lids upside down on the table and get your child to find the matching pairs. To make the game more challenging, add more lids.

Snap: Play a simple game of snap using picture cards. Get your child to snap on the pile of cards when they recognise the same picture.

The above information has been adapted from 'Better Health Channel' and 'Rehabilitation Centre of Chicago: Life Centre'.

<http://lifecenter.ric.org/index.php?tray=content&tid=top122&cid=3806>

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Receptive_language_disorder



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