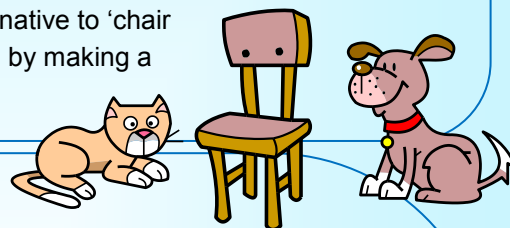


Understanding of Spoken Language

What are Keywords? (also called Information Carrying Words/ICWs)

- A Keyword is a **word which carries meaning in a spoken sentence**. The child has to understand the word's meaning in order to carry out the instruction successfully—they **cannot work out the word's meaning from the situational clues**.
- We can **check a child's understanding** by looking at **how many Keywords they can understand**.
- **There must be an alternative for each Keyword**. For example: put the dog on the chair (2ICW) - there needs to be an alternative to 'dog' (e.g. cat) and an alternative to 'chair' (e.g. table), otherwise the child could work out what you mean by making a 'best guess' and not have to understand any words.



Typical development of children's understanding:

Age/ Stage	Keyword Level	Description
Under 1 years	0 Keyword	Able to understand simple instructions in context helped by cues (gestures, use of objects). For example: 'Put your coat on' whilst holding the coat and it's clearly time to go out. In this instance the child does not need to understand any spoken words.
1 Year	1 Keyword	Able to understand one key word in a sentence when there is a choice. For example: whilst playing with the child you may say 'give me the <u>car</u> ' when they have a car and a train in front of them.
2	2 Keywords	'Put the <u>car</u> in the <u>box</u> ' and the child has to choose between car and train (1st choice), bag and box (2nd choice).
3	3 Keywords	'Put the <u>big car</u> in the <u>bag</u> ' (you will need: big car, little car, big train, little train, box, bag) / 'Put the <u>train under</u> the <u>box</u> ' (you will need train, car, box, bag). Ensure that the concept word can be applied to both objects. You can use colour, size, preposition, number as a choice at this level.
4	4 Keywords	'Put the <u>big train under</u> the <u>box</u> ' / 'Give me the <u>big car</u> and <u>yellow box</u> '.

When to provide support: If the child appears to be experiencing difficulties understanding instructions at the level expected for their age. Establish the level they can understand consistently and then work upwards from there. E.g. a 4 years understanding at 1 key word, will need to work on 2 key words next.