

Speech and Language Therapy Activities

Understanding of Language

Understanding Questions Advice for parents and teachers

If your child seems unable to answer a question, think about how you can change the question to make it easier for your child to understand and respond to.

Here are some suggestions:

- 1. Rephrase questions to make them more concrete, relating to the 'here and now'.**

For example: Simplify a question about an inferred feeling "How do you think Little Bear felt about his chair being broken?" to a question about something that can be seen "Look at the tears running down Little Bear's cheek. What is he doing?"

- 2. Reduce the number of elements.**

For example: Simplify a question about multiple elements such as "What is happening in this picture?" to a question that focuses on just one aspect, "What is the dog doing?"

- 3. Ask questions about personal experiences.**

For example: Simplify a question such as "Why do you think fire-fighters wear such big heavy coats?" to "What does it feel like when you stand close to a fire?"

- 4. Ask questions about very recent events or objects that are present.**

For example: Simplify a question about a prediction such as "What do you think you will eat at Christmas?" to a question about an event that just took place like "When we made our soup today, what did we put in it?"

5. Shorten the length of the question or simplify the sentence structure.

For example: Simplify the question "Why did Arthur draw red dots on his body and pretend to be sick?" to "Did Arthur want to stay home from school?", "Did he want the kids at school to see his new glasses?"

6. Simplify a question or use familiar vocabulary.

For example: Simplify the question "What kind of instrument is this?" by asking questions that require making a choice such as "Is this a piano or a guitar?", or try a yes/no answer like "Is this a drum that we hit with a stick?"

7. Allow more time for comprehension and responding.

For example tell the child "I'll come back to you in a minute. You think about it for a bit." You can also try asking another child the same type of question first so that they can provide a model for the child.

References

Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978). *The language of learning: the preschool years*. New York: Gurne and Stratton Inc.

Elks and McLachlan (2008). *Language Builders: advice and activities to encourage children's communication skills*. St Maybn; Elklan.