

Speech and Language Therapy

Two Key Word Activities

After children are able to understand a range of single spoken words they will start to be able to understand two key words (often called 'information-carrying words') in a sentence they hear. The key words are the words in the sentence that carry meaning in the context they are spoken – for instance if we always say “put your car in the box” when it's time to tidy it away they don't need to recognise the words to carry out the instruction. If we had a choice of a box and a bag to put the car in the child would need to understand the word 'box' to carry the same instruction out correctly. They would not need to understand and remember both 'car' and 'box' unless they also had a choice of vehicle e.g. a car and a bus.

Do remember:

- ✓ Keep your language simple and the activities short.
- ✓ Emphasise two key words out of each short sentence you say.
- ✓ Give your child simple instructions to see if they can follow the key words you say.
- ✓ To begin with use extra gestures or signs to help your child understand the words but then fade these out to see if your child can understand the spoken words without visual cues.
- ✓ Praise your child for listening well.
- ✓ Ask your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) for advice if you are unsure about how best to help your child.

Here are some activities to develop two-key word level understanding:

- 1. Dressing Up:** Find a doll or teddy for your child to dress up, plus some of your child's clothes. The idea is to for them to put on one

item of clothing at a time, either on themselves OR on teddy/doll e.g. "trousers for teddy", "jumper for James", "hat on doll".



2. **Actions:** Find 2 toys e.g. a teddy and a doll. Give your child instructions such as "make teddy run" or "make dolly jump", "make teddy wash" etc.

3. **Positional words:** Use a teddy/doll/action figure and see if your child can e.g. "put teddy under the table", "on the chair". You can also play tidying up games e.g. "put the shoe in the box/put the shoe on the shelf" etc.

4. **Actions in places:** Using a teddy/doll/figure see if your child can "make dolly run on the sofa"/"jump on the table". Your child must make the toy do the correct action AND make sure it's in the right place.



5. **Tea set play:** You can give instructions about objects in places e.g. "put the cup on the table", "put the plate in the sink", or about toys and food e.g. "give teddy a biscuit", "can dolly have some pizza?"



6. **Hiding games:** Give the child instructions about where to hide items/toys e.g. "put the brick in the tin", "put the car in the box". Then either look for them together or get another child to come and look for them (you could call it a 'toy hunt', or a 'treasure hunt').

7. **Body parts:** Sing songs about body parts e.g. "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes". Then see if your child can point to body parts on you, themselves or on a teddy/doll e.g. "touch Tom's hair", "touch mummy's nose", "where's teddy's mouth?" etc.



8. **Active outdoor games:** Give your child instructions about what action to do to where/who e.g. "run to the slide", "jump to Granny", "march to the house" etc.

9. **Posting games:** Make a simple post box out of an old cereal box. Put out pictures of e.g. different animals and get your child to listen to which two you want them to post (e.g. "pig and cow", "horse and monkey"). You could also use simple action pictures (e.g. of a girl running, eating, sleeping, playing and a boy doing the same actions) – ask your child to e.g. "find the boy sleeping", "which girl is playing?".

10. **Books:** Look at picture books together and talk about what you see emphasising two key words per sentence e.g. "look at the big car", "see the pig jumping". See if your child can point correctly to things such as "the little train", "the happy monkey", "the girl running" when there is a choice of these elements.



11. **Colouring games:** If your child likes colouring and you have some suitable colouring pictures of animals or characters, you get them to listen to two key word instructions about what to colour e.g. "colour the sheep's nose", "colour the pig's ear", "colour Peppa's coat", colour George's scarf" etc.

12. **Tidying away:** Make a game of tidying away toys, lotto cards and inset puzzle pieces when they are finished with e.g. "find me the bus and train", "snake and bear", "shoes and coat" etc.