



Receptive Language: What Is It and Why Is It Important?

Receptive language refers to the ability to listen and understand speech and follow directions. It typically develops before expressive language. A child must understand words BEFORE he begins to use them to communicate.

Indicators of Receptive Language Problems:

- Not following simple directions after 15 to 18 months of age
- Ignoring spoken language such as not responding to their name
- Repeating a question rather than answering it
- Using same words and phrases without adding new ones
- Answering a question incorrectly or off target

What can Parents do to help?

Change the way you talk with your child since they are not learning language in a typical way. Normal, everyday, adult conversation **DOES NOT** work to help children with receptive language delays. Use language **one step above** where a child is expressively. For children who are **minimally verbal** (says 10 words or less for children under 2 and less than 50 words over 2) **use mostly single words during play and daily routines**. For children saying a lot of **single words**, talk to them using mostly **2 word phrases**. For children using short **2-3 word phrases**, use mostly **very short 3-4 word sentences**. We do this because language processing is difficult and we don't want to overload their systems.

How can I help my child when he/she doesn't understand?

SHOW HIM, TELL HIM, HELP HIM!

- 1. Tell him:** label people, things, and actions. Pause and repeat. Use a specific cue to gain attention such as watch, look, hey!
- 2. Show him:** point, hold an object, demonstrate
- 3. Help him:** physical, hand on assistance when necessary to help him understand and follow through with following directions. Repeat so he can link the activity to the words. Use simple commands. Examples: get your shoes, bring me a diaper, clean up toy, put cup in sink, give it to me, give me five, wave bye bye, give kiss, sit down, come here.