A guide to

understanding instructions - one word level

Does your child or a child you work with have difficulty following even the simplest instructions? If so, this leaflet provides information and advice to support your child.

Information carrying words
Information carrying words (key words) are the words in a spoken instruction that must be understood to be successful. When we speak, not all the words we use carry information. For example, in the command “point to teddy”, teddy is the key word that needs to be understood.

When a child is able to carry out a command such as “point to teddy”, where there is a choice of items, we say that their understanding is at a one word level.

Activities
If your child is not yet able to carry out one word level requests, the following suggestions for activities to carry out at home may help them to develop this skill.

Make sure you use one key word in your request, although all items must be available to ensure the request is at one word level.

Put out a selection of objects and say to your child:
Give me the... teddy (e.g. “Point to teddy”).

Put out a selection of clothes and say:
Where’s the...? t-shirt  (e.g. “Where’s the t-shirt?”).

Give the child a dolly and say:
Touch dolly’s... hair  (e.g. “Touch dolly’s hair”).

Give the child a dolly and say:
Make dolly... sleep  (e.g. “Make dolly sleep”).

Using the enclosed pictures say:
Who’s... eating  e.g. “Who’s eating?”.

Modelling
If your child has difficulty with any of the tasks, give them a good model by showing them, repeating what you said and/or using gestures to support what you say.

For example:
Adult:  “Where’s the cup?”
Child: No response.
Adult:  “Look! Here’s the cup” (show child the cup).
Adult:  “Where’s the cup?”
Child: Points to cup.
Adult:  “Well done!”
Avoid naming the item the child wrongly selects as this can be confusing for them.

Remember to give plenty of praise and encouragement to the child. If they select an incorrect item, name the item they have selected and then repeat the original request e.g. “that’s a car, where’s the cup?”

**Contact us**
Please contact the Children’s Therapies Department if you have any queries or concerns regarding the information in this leaflet.

**Visit:** [www.kentcht.nhs.uk/thepod](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/thepod)

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