

Understanding of Language: Full Screening Tool

Things to think about:

- You will need to demonstrate to the child what you want them to do e.g. use the objects and give some examples before you start 'look the horse is jumping'.
- Make sure you don't give the child extra clues, for instance don't point or look at the named object.
- Only help the child if they are really stuck!
- The child may look towards the picture / object but not reach for it, accept this as their response and offer them the chosen item.
- Always use items that your child knows the name of.
- Praise the child and make it fun!
- Find a quiet space to play without interruptions / distractions.
- Prior to starting the activity name all the equipment with the child(ren) to check that they are familiar with the vocabulary.
- You do not need to carry out all of the assessment, if your child is struggling at a level you do not need to move onto the next level.
- It is not necessary for the child to use words for this assessment e.g. they can use gesture or pointing to show they have understood.
- Once the child has completed the task, replace the object so it is back in front of the child for the next question.
- Only give each instruction once to the child, make sure you have their attention before each instruction.
- Ensure that any concepts introduced are understood at a single word level before using them as an information carrying word in a longer sentence e.g. they need to understand big and apple, before understanding big apple.

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As children develop they are more able to follow instructions of increasing complexity. This assessment comprises of 2 parts:

Part 1 looks at 'information carrying words' and part 2 looks at understanding questions.

Part 1: Understanding Information Carrying Words

Assessing Understanding

'Information carrying words' refer to the number of important words which are in a sentence. Many words in a sentence are redundant in common everyday situations.

For example, if the child is near his coat peg at break time and an adult is there holding a coat and says "put your coat on", the child does not need to understand any of the words because s/he can see what is needed from the context.

So, given the situation:

"put your coat on" = 0 information carrying words being understood

Children do not need to understand every word in a sentence in order to follow it, for example in the sentence 'where is the ball', the word 'ball' is the only word that the child will actually have to understand.

Games and activities can be set up so that the equipment and language can be manipulated to control the level of understanding required.

Resources List:

Before starting the assessment please ensure you have the following resources available. Please only put out in front of the child the resources which are needed for the level you are assessing. All resources should be easily available in your setting and can be stored in an assessment bag for future use. If you do not have the specific item mentioned, you could replace with a similar object.

1 information carrying word	Pig, horse, ball, car, cup, shoe, gate (to jump), fabric (to sleep/hide), toy food (to eat), cup/bowl (to drink)
2 information carrying words	Car, ball, horse, pig, spoon, shoe, cup, ball
3 information carrying words	Horse, spoon, cup, shoe, ball, car, pig
4 information carrying words	Spoon, shoe, pig, cup/bowl (to drink), car, ball, horse, cow, dog

What to expect:

Following assessment use this guide to inform your decision making as to whether the child's understanding is age appropriate or requires further support.

1 Information Carrying Word	18 months-2 years: should be able to understand a number of single familiar words
2 Information Carrying Words	2-3 years old: should be able to understand instructions involving 2 information carrying words
3 Information Carrying Words	3 years old: should be able to understand instructions involving 3 information carrying words
4 Information Carrying Words	4-5 years: should be able to understand instructions involving increasing length

What next?

Following your use of the Screening Tool you may have identified areas for concern. Where areas of difficulty have been identified you should refer to section 3 of the Toolkit in order to set outcomes and plan strategies to support the child. These should be documented using the SEND Plan and progress can be tracked accordingly.

Provide feedback to parents on the child's strengths and areas for development.

Understanding Assessment - Information Carrying Words

1 Information Carrying Word Understanding: Naming Words

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.

(Please tick if your child has managed to follow this word).

Where is the pig?	Y/N
Where is the horse?	Y/N
Where is the ball?	Y/N
Where is the car?	Y/N
Where is the cup?	Y/N
Where is the shoe?	Y/N

Understanding 1 Information Carrying Word: Action Words

Using the horse, model to the child the following actions, whilst playing tell them what the horse is doing. Stop carrying out the actions yourself and give the child the horse, ask them to follow the instructions below.

(Please tick if your child has managed to carry out this action).

Can you make him jump?	Y/N
Can you make him sleep?	Y/N
Can you make him eat?	Y/N
Can you make him run?	Y/N
Can you make him drink?	Y/N
Can you make him hide?	Y/N

Understanding 2 Information Carrying Words

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.

Hold your hand out clearly for the 'can I have' instructions.

(Please tick if your child has managed to follow the instruction).

Can I have the car and the ball?	Y/N
Can you make the horse jump?	Y/N
Can you make the pig sleep?	Y/N
Put the spoon in the shoe	Y/N
Put the car in the cup	Y/N
Can I have the ball and the spoon?	Y/N

Understanding Assessment - Information Carrying Words

Understanding 3 Information Carrying Words

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.

Hold your hand out clearly for the 'give me' instructions.

Please tick if your child has managed to follow the instruction.

Give me the horse, the spoon and the cup	Y/N
Give me the shoe, the ball and the car	Y/N
Give the ball and the car to the pig	Y/N
Give me the horse, the spoon and the pig	Y/N
Put the pig under the shoe	Y/N
Make the horse eat the shoe	Y/N

Understanding 4 Information Carrying Words

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.

(Please tick if your child has managed to follow the instruction).

Put the spoon in the shoe and give the pig a drink	Y/N
Put the car and the ball under the shoe	Y/N
Find the ball, the horse, the cup and the spoon	Y/N
Show me the cow's nose and the dog's ears	Y/N
Put the cow on the spoon and pig on shoe	Y/N
Put the cow under the shoe and give me the pig	Y/N

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Part 2: Understanding Questions

Assessing Understanding

Marion Blank, psychologist, identified various question types. These questions range in difficulty from relatively easy to more complex. Blank identified four levels of questioning, stating that children will be able to understand and respond to more difficult questions as their language skills develop.

Children need to be able to demonstrate strong skills in the earlier levels (Level 1 and 2) before they can move on to mastering the more complex questions and language presented in the more difficult levels (Levels 3 and 4, which are usually attained by about six years of age.)

As the levels progress language becomes more abstract. Level 1 focusses on the whole object e.g. this is when children can label and describe the things they can see or manipulate. At level 2 children describe objects by function or other selected features e.g. shape, size or category such as it being for cutting (scissors) for drinking (cup). At level 3 children have taken a big step in their use of language. They sort, classify, order, compare, sequence and conceptualize. Level 4 is the stage where children are beginning to be able to talk about objects and events that are not necessarily immediate. They will be able to formulate a theory and justify it. Conduct tests to try out theories. Explain and predict events and problems. This stage is essentially the problem solving stage. Using the assessment, as well as your own observations within play (using the poster to support you) please identify which BLANK level you feel the child is working at.

Understanding (BLANKS) Assessment

BLANK Level	Age of Development	Achieved (when achieved 70% of the time)
Level 1 Naming	2 - 3 years	Y/N
Level 2 Describing	3 - 4 years	Y/N
Level 3 Think About It	4 - 5 years	Y/N
Level 4 Reasoning	5 years +	Y/N

Blank Levels Assessment using 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'

For this assessment use the page with the words 'Splash splosh! Splash splosh! Splash splosh' (and the picture of the family in the river) in the 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' book. Ask the child the following questions to identify which Blank level(s) the child is already able to understand. When you know which level they are at, you can consider a target to support them to develop to the next level if needed. You can also use this knowledge to inform the level of questions that you use when you are interacting with the child, in order to support the child's development.

Level 1 questions:

What is this? (point to the dog)

Show me their shoes

Point to the baby

What is this? (point to the duck)

Level 2 questions:

Where are they?

What does the water feel like?

Who is wearing pink?

What can you wear on your feet?

Level 3 questions:

Find something which is not a person

What might happen next?

What could he say? (Pointing to the boy with the dog)

Tell me something else you can put on your feet?

Level 4 questions:

What will happen if the girl falls over? (pointing to the last girl)

If you got wet what would you do?

Why is the baby on the man's shoulders?

How are noses and ears the same? (point to these as they are mentioned)

Aged 2-3 years

Always use real objects or pictures to support understanding at level 1



Level 1 - Naming

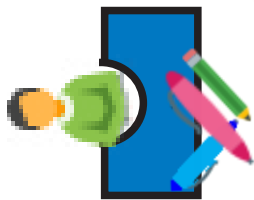
What is it?

Show me a pen.

Find another one like this.

Aged 3-4 years

Pictures will support understanding at level 2



Level 2 - Describing

What is happening in the picture?

Who? Where?

What can you stick with?

Tell me another colour?

What goes with scissors?

What does glue feel like?

Aged 4-5 years

Pictures may help at level 3



Level 3 - Think about it

Get a pen and lined paper and write the date

What could he say?

What might happen next?

Find the scissors that are not sharp?

Tell me another thing you can write with?

Aged 5+ years

Pictures are not always needed at level 4



Level 4 - Reasoning

What could you do if your pen stopped working?

What made the man fall off his bike?

Why can't we go outside to play?

How are a pen and a pencil the same?

How do you know the ice will melt?