

# Understanding of Language Toolkit

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# Understanding of Language: 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 a key word in a longer sentence e.g. they need to understand big and apple, before understanding big apple.

# Understanding of Language: Full Screener

As children develop they are more able to follow instructions of increasing complexity. This assessment comprises of 2 parts. Part 1 looks at 'key words' and part 2 looks at understanding questions.

## Part 1: Key Word Understanding

### Assessing Understanding

'Key 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 key 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 Keyword	Pig, horse, ball, car, cup, shoe, gate (to <b>jump</b> ), fabric (to <b>sleep/</b> hide), toy food (to eat), cup/bowl (to drink)
2 Keywords	Car, ball, horse, pig, spoon, shoe, car, cup, ball
3 Keywords	Horse, spoon, cup, shoe, ball, car, pig
4 Keywords	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 Keyword	18 months: should be able to understand a number of single familiar words
2 Keywords	2 years old: should be able to understand instructions involving 2 key words
3 Keywords	3 years old: should be able to understand instructions involving 3 key words
4 Keywords	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 (Keywords) Assessment

### 1 Key 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 <b>pig</b> ?	Y/N
Where is the <b>horse</b> ?	Y/N
Where is the <b>ball</b> ?	Y/N
Where is the <b>car</b> ?	Y/N
Where is the <b>cup</b> ?	Y/N
Where is the <b>shoe</b> ?	Y/N

### 1 Key Word Understanding: 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 <b>jump</b> ?	Y/N
Can you make him <b>sleep</b> ?	Y/N
Can you make him <b>eat</b> ?	Y/N
Can you make him <b>run</b> ?	Y/N
Can you make him <b>drink</b> ?	Y/N
Can you make him <b>hide</b> ?	Y/N

### 2 Key Word Understanding

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.  
(Please tick if your child has managed to follow the instruction).

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

## Understanding (Keywords) Assessment

### 3 Key Word Understanding

Please have all items out in front of the child for each instruction.  
(Please tick if your child has managed to follow the instruction).

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

### 4 Key Word Understanding

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

# Understanding of Language: Full Screener

## 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+	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 (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)



# 'Blank' levels of questions Poster

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 do outside to play his bike?

How are a pen and a pencil the same?

How do you know the ice will melt?

Pictures may help  
at level 3



## Level 3 - Think about it

Get a pen and lined paper and write the date

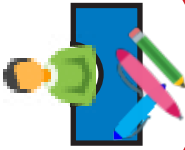
What could he say?

What might happen next?

Find the scissors that are not sharp?

Tell me another thing you can write with?

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?

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.