

The Early Words Checklist: Explanation

The *Early Words Checklist* helps you to record which words a child is able to **understand** and **say**. It is useful to fill the form out accurately so you have a true reflection of what the child is understanding and saying.

Understanding

Children are good at picking up on visual cues to help them understand what you are telling them. This needs to be taken into account when deciding whether a child understands a word.

A child truly **understands** a word if they can follow an instruction e.g. 'where's your **coat?**' and the instruction is given in the following ways:

- 1) **In an unusual situation.** For example, if you ask a child to get their coat just before you are going out and you have already put on your coat or shoes they may just be understanding the routine not the word, if you ask them to do this at a random time of day you may see a different response.
- 2) **Without any visual cues.** Be aware of whether you have pointed to the object with your finger or looked towards it.
- 3) **With a choice of possible objects/actions.** Was there a choice of at least 3 objects that you could have been asking the child to find?
- 4) **Several times:** Can the child respond to the same instruction when repeated at different times?

Once you know that a child understands the word, record it on the sheet.

Saying

When recording the words the child says, make sure that the words are used spontaneously and not copied from you. You may want to record if the child is able to copy words but this does not necessarily mean that the child understands them or can use them spontaneously.

Some words may not be clear but if you know what they mean then it counts as them 'saying' the word.

REMEMBER!

It may take time to find out what words a child understands and says.

How to help

Once you have found out which words the child understands, choose some words he/she needs help to learn. It is helpful to work on one category at a time and to choose just a few words to focus on over a period of time. Once the words have been decided on, choose fun activities during which the target words would be repeated frequently.

