

## What are Key Word Instructions?



Sometimes, when talking about understanding/comprehension of language, the term 'key words' is used. This relates to how many pieces of information a person needs to understand to be able to follow a verbal instruction.

A one key word instruction has one piece of information – this information could be an object (noun), an action word (verb), a positional word (preposition) or a descriptive word (adjective).

Some examples of one key word instructions:

Find me the car (from a selection of objects)

Make the teddy jump (the child only has a teddy)

Give me the red cup (there is a selection of different coloured cups to choose)

Put the car in the box (the child has a car and a box)



A two key word instruction contains two pieces of information the person needs to understand.

Some examples are:

Give me the big teddy (the child has a big and little teddy and big and little dolly)

Put the car under the box (the child has a car and a truck and a box)



The easiest way to work out how many key words an instruction has is to underline the words where there is choice, for example:

Put the toast on the red cup – the child has a choice of toast and other food items, different coloured cups and different coloured plates. To understand this instruction you need to understand 3 pieces of information.

An example of a 4 key word instruction is:

Put the big cow under the box – there is a choice of a big and little farm animals, a location where you can put them (in/on/under), and object (box/bag).



## Why do we work on Key Word Instructions?

Working on key word instructions can help support your child to remember, process and understand verbal information. You can also use key word instructions to help develop understanding of concepts, e.g. colour, size (big/little) and place (in/on/under).