

1 and 2 Key word Levels

Children need to be able to follow key words to understand sentences and instructions.
A key word is an important word in a sentence.

Your child needs to use key words in their talking to help get their message across.

Some children need help understanding key words. Your speech and language therapist will tell you:

- How many key words your child can follow in a sentence
- Activities to help your child build their understanding of key words
- Ways you can talk to your child throughout your day help their understanding

1 key word level

At 1 key word level your child must make a choice and follow one word.

1 key word activity example

You will need more than 1 toy or object so that your child can make a choice.

For example: 'Find the **teddy**'



Your child has a choice of:

Teddy
Mr potato head
Dolly

They have to understand 1 key word: **teddy**.

Examples you can use at home:

'Show me the **hat**' – from a choice of 3 items.

'Find your **toothbrush**' - from a choice of 3 items.

2 Key Word level

At 2 key word level your child must make a choice and follow 2 words.

For example: 'Find **teddy's eyes**'



Your child has a choice for 2 words in the sentence:

Find

Teddy's

Eyes

Mr potato head's
Dolly's

Ears
Other body parts

To follow the instruction correctly they need to understand 2 key words.

At 2 key word level, your child might also be learning to follow instructions that have different words. They might be learning to follow:

- Action words: 'Make **teddy sleep**'

Examples you can use at home:

'Give me the **hat** and the **gloves**' – from a choice of 4 items.

'Give the **pasta** to the **teddy**' – from a choice of 3 food items and 2 characters.

Using key words in your day:

Your speech and language therapist will give activities for you to practice following 1 or 2 key words with your child. You can do lots throughout your day to help too. You can try:

- Matching your child's key word level with your instructions when you get ready. For example: 'where are mummy's shoes' 'get daddy's jumper'
- Commenting using key words when you play with your child. If they are giving you a message – you can use the word they are trying to say and add one more. For example 'the car's driving'
- Use different types of words in your day – You can name objects. You can also talk about what you are doing, what objects look like and where objects are.

See our advice sheet on 3 and 4 key word level if your child is able to understand instructions with 2 key words.

For more information about key word levels, see our videos on the [Barnsley Children's speech and language therapy Youtube channel](#).