

Developmental Area:	Receptive Language
Skill Strand:	Auditory Memory for Understanding
Skill Phase:	Systematic Preparation
Skill Step:	I follow instructions at two-word-level if the objects are elsewhere or in a more demanding task.

You may be wanting to facilitate this skill step with most of your children if you are considering targeted skill progression and creating firm foundations for progression. You may want to facilitate this skill step with just a few children or with an individual target child as this is their next step.

Whatever the reason, this Practical Ideas Sheet will help you to reflect on your current practice and maybe to get some new ideas. Where possible, the practical ideas are grouped into the three layers of your practice.

Interactions, Targeted Use of the Learning Environment and Daily Routines

This skill step is relatively easy to weave into your everyday practice with a little thought. After the initial thought, such practice should just become normal and automatic. Although you may want to plan a few focussed activities, the mainstay of facilitating this skill step will be the dropping-in of instructions into your interactions.

For ease, these practical ideas will be broken down into 'elsewhere' and 'more demanding tasks.' For both, you must consider the following within your interaction strategies and if you do carry out any focus activities:

General Principles to Consider

Over time you will become more familiar with the word-level of instructions and things you are saying. However, whether you are embedding these into your interactions or planning a more focussed activity, there are some key things that you need to remember:

- **Withdraw visual support** - As you are giving the instruction, don't point to or look directly at the things you are asking the child to find or use. Ensure the child is using receptive language skills and not just watching you. Of course, if the child struggles, support the child by pointing and helping out. However, don't do this straight away. This is tricky as we often use non-verbal support automatically and it is part of our good practice. However, in this skill-building instance, we need to momentarily take that non-verbal support away.
- **Use Vocabulary the child knows** - Ensure that the child knows any nouns, verbs or concepts you are using within the instruction. Generally stick with more familiar vocabulary that you know the child knows. The focus of this skill step and your interventions is to build auditory memory for understanding. Where you do need to add and teach new vocabulary, the new words need to be used in shorter sentences and repeated more so that the words can be learnt. Here, you are building the amount of language a child can process, hence the need for them to already understand the words within the instruction. Generally, for this skill step

you are likely to use two naming words/nouns within your instructions.

- **Ensure there is a choice** - This is the more complex one to consider when dropping-in instructions or when planning activities. For this skill step, if you were asking the child to “pass me an apple and a cup,” whilst standing away from the snack table or the home corner, you would, ideally, need to make sure there were a few different objects there, including an apple and a cup of course. However, you need to make sure that there is not too much choice and that the task isn't too overwhelming.

Objects Elsewhere

The idea of developing this skill step when objects are elsewhere is quite simple really. Whilst the child is not directly within an area or standing in front of the resources you are going to ask for, point over to the area/resources and ask the child to find you two things. For example, when standing just outside the home corner, can the child get you a **plate** and a **spoon**; whilst standing just outside the vehicle area, can the child get you a **bus** and a **car** or when outside, can the child run and find you a **stone** and a **leaf**?

As mentioned before in the earlier considerations, you will need to make sure that the child knows the words for the objects you are asking for. If you are dropping-in instructions within the give-and-take of your interactions, there will always be enough choice. If anything, you will need to make sure that there is not too much.

The main thing to consider when objects are elsewhere is creating a level of demand that builds skill but which is not unrealistic. For this skill step, you are expecting the children to listen to and understand the target vocabulary when they cannot see the objects at the moment of speaking. They will then need to hold these words for much longer than usual as they walk to the resources or area concerned or as they run around your outdoor learning environment searching for what you have asked for. Once they have found one object, they will still need to remember and keep holding the word for the second object as they search for this. All of the time, they will have to filter out distractions from the learning environment and from other children. Wow! That is why understanding in this way is more demanding.

With all of this in mind, asking them to fetch you two objects from the home corner when you are standing outside, expecting the child to walk across the outdoor learning environment, go inside and across to the other side of your setting before they eventually get to the home corner is unrealistic. Maybe starting off by asking them to get you the two objects whilst standing just outside the home corner might be better and more realistic. As the child's skills progress, you can facilitate progression by moving onto higher skill steps. However, you can also deepen skill at this level by gradually dropping-in instructions to go get/find two things when you are a little further away, creating more demand.

More Demanding Tasks

The easiest way to think about this is to consider resources that take a little time for the child to accomplish. They will usually be more demanding from a motor point of view, meaning the child has to hold your two words for longer and also whilst concentrating on the task. Really, you are trying to build Auditory Memory for Understanding at a deeper level, more akin to the level a child will need in the future to underpin writing.

Your opportunities will be unique to your setting and the resources you have. However, here are a few examples to help get you started:

- **Threading** - Ask the child to thread or make you a necklace made up of two different coloured beads. Here the child needs to be able to thread, naturally, and also need to know their colour vocabulary.
- **Cutters** - if you have cutters in your playdough area, can the child cut you out two animals or two vehicles or one animal and one vehicle on request? Again, the child will need to know the vocabulary used.
- **Cutting out** - can the child cut you out two pictures or two shapes from a choice of pictures or shapes when you ask? Again, they will need to know the vocabulary and need to be able to hold scissors and to have moved on from snipping to being able to cut. We are not interested in the neatness of the cutting out but the task cannot be too difficult from a motor point of view.
- **Stampers** - with ink pad stampers, all-in-one stampers or paint stampers, can the child print out two things from a small choice of stampers on request. Again, they need to know the vocabulary of the picture the stamper makes and they need to be able to see which stamper is which.
- **Drawing** - Can the child draw you two simple things on request? Can they do something like draw a circle with two different coloured pens, on request? Here, you would need to consider their level of drawing skill and also their understanding of colour if you are going to use colour vocabulary. We are not interested in the quality of the drawing, naturally, but the task cannot be too demanding.
- **Wheeled vehicles** - Can the child ride the bike they are on to the sandpit and Mrs Smith?

Although this skill step does not stipulate the order that words need to be held and the sequence of the instruction, many of these more demanding tasks do imply instructions in a certain order. Even if a child holds both words but threads the beads or stamps the stampers in the wrong order, they have still demonstrated this skill step. However, the sequential aspect of the child's understanding can give us more insight into their sequential skills. Once the child has made some progress and as you are gently modelling such tasks, make sure you model following such instructions in the right order, even if you are not insisting that the child has to follow the order.

Focussed Activities

Focussed activities for this skill step are likely to be the use of more demanding tasks (some examples are listed above) with a group of children or a specific, individual child. This will depend on whether you are building this skill step with a few children or just with an individual target child.

When you have children at different levels with Auditory Memory for Understanding, remember that you can use the same resource with the group but then, when giving each child a turn, give each child an instruction at a different word-level. Therefore, the children feel that they are all doing the same thing whereas, in reality, you are differentiating it by the word-level of the instructions you give.

If the children are at a similar level with this skill, you could even give them all their

own set of resources (for example, they each have a lace for threading and a small bowl with a choice of six different coloured beads in.) This way, the child gets a turn every time you give an instruction. For the next instruction, they would need to put the objects back to the way they were at the beginning or simply grab another lace to thread another. In this case you might want to have 2 beads of each colour in your bowl, otherwise you will lose the level of choice element that is so important to the word level after the first turn of threading..

Whether you are dropping-in instructions into your interactions, as children engage with more demanding tasks within child-initiated learning or carrying out a more focussed task, it is essential that you monitor who can do this skill step easily and is ready to move on and/or deepen this skill. Who is finding this very tricky and there may be a need to backtrack? Who is making progress but continues to be inconsistent, indicating that the child needs this skill step consolidating before moving on?