

Behaviour, attention or difficulty understanding lanaguage?

Why receptive language difficulties may present as challenging behaviour or poor attention.

What is receptive language?

Receptive language is the ability to understand words and language and gain information and meaning from:

- Routines (e.g. we have finished our breakfast so next it is time to get dressed)
- Visual information within the environment (e.g. Mom holding her keys means that we are going to get the car, a green light means go)
- Sounds and words (e.g. a siren means a fire engine is coming down the street, the word ball means a round bouncy thing we play with)
- Concepts such as size, shape, colours and time, grammar (e.g. regular plurals: cat/s, regular past tense: fetch/ed)
- Written information (e.g. signs in the environment like “no climbing”, written stories).

Why is receptive language important?

Receptive language is important in order to communicate successfully. Children who have understanding difficulties may find it challenging to follow instructions and may not respond appropriately to questions and requests. Within the school setting, difficulties in understanding may lead to **attention** and **listening difficulties** and/or **behavioural issues**. As most activities require a good understanding of language, it may also make it difficult for the student to access information being presented in the classroom or engage in classroom activities and academic tasks.

If the student does not understand what is being asked of them, it may appear as though they are not paying attention or misbehaving. When in reality, the student does not understand what it expected of them.

How can I tell if my student is having difficulty with receptive language?

If a child has difficulties with receptive language they might:

- Have difficulty attending and listening to language
- Not pay attention within groups
- Not follow instructions that others the same age would be able to follow
- Respond to questions by repeating what you say instead of giving an answer
- Find it difficult to listen to stories
- Give unusual answers to questions

