

ADVICE SHEET

Using contextual play to develop an understanding of information-carrying words in the EYFS

An **information-carrying word** can be very helpful for EYFS children who are learning language. Often, when practitioners, teachers and parents are introducing language, they use physical or indicative clues to help the children understand what they mean.

For example, when they are discussing a noun or object, such as 'chair', they will often either point at a chair or make some distinguishable gesture to guide the child in the right direction.

We can also use contextual play (setting the scene) to help children learn vocabulary and learn that objects have names. This is a repetitive process. Children need to hear the word multiple time (for some children up to 160 time), to link the real object to the label.

Developmentally the next step would be to link a noun with a verb (action word). Again children will need to link the action to the word “**Boy drinking**”

An example of this is - an adult would set up a farm small world play and label the objects/action as they or the child picks them up for e.g.” that’s a cow”, “the cow is eating”, “this is a sheep”, ” the sheep is in the barn “or “the farmer is on the roof”



Setting the scene (contextual play) and telling a little story around it makes the activity more meaningful for the child.

Once a child can understand words for their meaning or associate them with the correct object or they can understand them at a 1 ICW level. Gradually, a child will understand more ICW's at a time to long utterances and eventually being able to follow a narrative.

The amount of information carrying words a child can understand in an instruction depends on their age or developmental stage, for example:

- At 12 months a child can understand 1 information carrying word e.g. find the **cat**.
- At 24 months a child can understand 2 information carrying word e.g. find the **cat** and the **dog**.
- At 36 month a child can understand 3 information carrying word e.g. put the **big teddy** in the **bag**.
- At 48 months a child can understand 4 information carrying word e.g. give me the **blue pen** and the **small dolly**.

For a word to be an information carrying word it must always have an alternative in the situation. The phrase "find the blue pen and small dolly" to be a 4 information carrying words instruction there must be, a red pen, blue, pen, red pencil, blue pencil, big dolly, big teddy, small dolly and small teddy.

Useful Supporting materials:

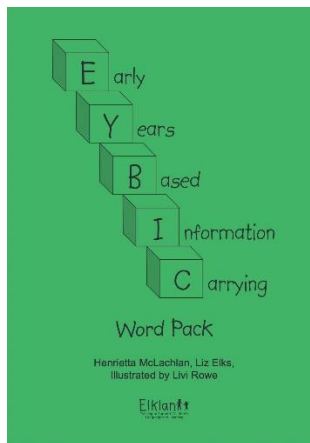
Salford NHS have videos on introducing ICWS in the home which show you how to introduce them and to reduce your own language.

<https://www.speakupsalford.nhs.uk/information-carrying-words>

Cambridgeshire NHS

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/docs/default-source/salt---at-home/information-carrying-words>

An excellent resource that makes it very easy for you is:



£35 for book £80 for digital version

https://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/EYBIC_Word_Pack

Plus The **SIMPLE LANGUAGE IN PLAY** posters (also on the website)