

Understanding Language

Ages 3 – 4

Understanding language, also known as 'receptive language', is the ability to understand spoken language and respond to it appropriately. This involves the understanding of words, sentences and questions.

Between the ages of three and four years old, children may:

understand and use a wider range of vocabulary

ask lots of questions as they demonstrate their thirst to find out more about the world around them

understand describing words and use them for different things, such as describing what they are doing, what something looked like, where they were playing and who they were playing with



understand a range of concepts, such as size, number, colour and time

respond to simple questions, answering appropriately

understand a phrase, instruction or question that has two or three parts

remember a simple story with pictures and answer questions about it

understand the emotions of others as they pick up on facial expressions and body language cues



Please note: This resource has been made to help educators reflect on children's learning and development in the early years. Learning can take many different forms, so please keep in mind that the poster will only provide a snapshot of what children may be learning and developing at this stage.

Disclaimer: Every setting's needs are different and so the recommendations in this resource may not be suitable for all settings. The examples used are not an exhaustive list and it is for you to consider whether it is appropriate to use this guidance within your setting.