



WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR CHILD SAYS

- Try to reduce background noise, for example, turn off the television.
- Make natural eye contact and use clear body language with your child.
- Acknowledge what you did understand, for example, "I got the bit about but what came next?"
- Establish the context, for example, "Is it something that happened last night / on the playground / about your topic?", etc.
- Give plenty of time to listen to your child.
- Give positive feedback as appropriate, for example, "That was really clear, well done!"
- Encourage your child to 'tell' you another way, for example, by pointing, miming, drawing or using different words.
- Don't rely too heavily on others 'interpreting', as this can lead to mistakes.
- Be honest when you don't understand, and tell your child what they can do to help you. Try to give the message that the problem is yours, not theirs, for example, "My ears aren't working properly today! Can you tell me again louder/slower," etc.
- If you understand part of your child's conversation, repeat it back. This shows them that they were partly successful and gives them confidence.
- If your child is *really* difficult to understand, use strategies to anticipate what they might want to say, for example, using a home-school diary or clue bags (bags containing relevant objects, e.g. postcards, tickets, etc). Ask the child to *show* you what they are trying to say by using gesture / taking you to the object.
- Sometimes you may want to admit that you really cannot understand. Be as reassuring as possible. Change the subject and focus on something positive.
- See the sheet 'Speech Sound Advice' for ideas to help you to support your child's speech sound development.