

# Support understanding

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Supporting language and communication skills' from the Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

Understand receptive language

Check for understanding

Reduce barriers to understanding

Teach non-verbal communication

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Strategy: [Supporting language and communication skills](#)

Suggestion: [Support understanding](#)

Date

05 October 2021

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[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/support-understanding](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/support-understanding)

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## Understand receptive language

Receptive language is the ability to understand words and language and is needed to communicate successfully.

Learners who have difficulty understanding may find it challenging to:

- understand and follow instructions
- pay attention and listen
- respond appropriately to questions, and requests
- use language through speech, sign or alternative forms of communication to communicate wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas
- form friendships and engage in positive social interactions
- understand body language
- understand what went wrong, especially in high stress situations
- complete tests, exams, and academic tasks in higher level education.

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## Check for understanding



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Work with your learners to ensure they have understood and interpreted correctly the message being conveyed.

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## Reduce barriers to understanding

Suggestions to support understanding.

- ✓ Use visuals to give instructions, ask questions or show a routine.
- ✓ Check understanding of key concepts and vocabulary.
- ✓ Use actual objects and progress from the concrete to the abstract to teach understanding of words and concepts.
- ✓ Before initiating conversation, ensure that the learner's attention has been secured.
- ✓ Use graphic organisers to support thinking and planning.
- ✓ Avoid idioms such as "don't hit the roof" as these can cause confusion.
- ✓ Allow for processing time. Learners may require between 15–30 seconds to process an instruction and formulate a response.
- ✓ Ensure instructions are in the order they are to happen.
- ✓ Provide support to enable learners to share their ideas such as options to draw, write, gesture, or sign.

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## Teach non-verbal communication

Non-verbal cues can support students' understanding of what others might be thinking or feeling.

- ✓ Help students learn to notice the facial expression and body posture during interactions. Highlight examples in stories, video clips, or use the [emotions color wheel](#).
- ✓ Role-play in small groups to help practice recognition of meaning conveyed in postures and vocal intonations.
- ✓ Cue students to recognise common hand signs that are used in a classroom, such as recognising the palm facing forward to mean stop.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for students to watch short clips of a television show with the sound off. Ask students what they think is happening by analysing the postures and the movements of the actors.
- ✓ Play charades or pantomimes and have students guess the message. This helps to draw attention to meaning in body posturing.

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