

Following one information carrying word instructions

What are information carrying words?

An information carrying word (ICW) also known as a 'key word', is a word that carries *meaning* in an instruction. For a word to count as an ICW or key word the child has to make a 'choice' of some sort to complete the instruction correctly.

When working on ICWs or Key words, we always use familiar words for the child. We are not testing their understanding of the individual words but their ability to **follow** a certain length instruction.

- We only know if a child is able to follow ICW successfully if they can follow the instruction without any additional prompts such as the adult looking, pointing or gesturing at the item/activity we want them to select.
- If they struggle to follow the instruction we may need to do some of these things to 'help' them achieve the instruction correctly.
- As they become more confident with this, we should aim to remove all additional prompts so we can check they can follow the instruction independently.

The following activities can be used to support your child to develop these skills. Before, giving an instruction, it is important to remember to:

- Reduce background noise (turn off TV, radio etc) – ideally, try and find a quiet corner.
- Say their name or touch them gently on the arm and wait for them to look before giving the instruction
- Use simple language and praise to keep them engaged in the task.

Activity ideas

The ICW is underlined in the examples below. Remember the child needs to make a 'choice' for this item/action to make it count. Be creative and try to think of other examples with your child's favourite toys or activities.

- Give apple to horse - for this, you would need a few different animals and one food item (e.g. an apple). You are then telling the child which animal to give it to.
- "Give apple to horse" - for this, you would need a few different food items and one animal (e.g. a horse). You are then telling the child which food to feed to the animal.
- "Put a sticker on teddy's nose" - for this you would need stickers and a teddy. Ask the child to put the sticker on different body parts.
- "Make the horse jump" - for this, you would need a single animal (e.g. a horse) and different actions (e.g. jump, fly, sleep).
- "Put the car on the table" – for this you would need different transport toys (e.g. car, bus, plane and boat) and a table.



- “Roll the ball to teddy” – for this you would need a ball and different cuddly toys/animals (e.g. teddy, doll and dog). You are then telling the child which animal to roll it to.

How can I use this in real life?

Think about all the opportunities across your day that you can practice following 1 ICW with your child. This can be in everyday activities they enjoy as long as you are using familiar words and they only have to make one ‘choice’ to complete the instruction:

- Sorting out the washing
- Finding items in the supermarket
- Playing with teddies/dolls/vehicles
- Requesting different colour paints/pens
- Finding a certain colour sticker
- Finding objects/animals in a book
- Finding certain clothes to wear
- Choosing a certain colour/size brick when building a tower

Remember

- ❖ If your child is currently working on following 1 ICW, they won’t be ready to follow single word instructions, on their own, in day to day life.
- ❖ Think about the ‘instructions’ you give them on a day to day basis.
- ❖ If you really **NEED** them to follow an instruction then try to simplify this by using single words, gestures, pointing or pictures to help them be successful.
- ❖ When you have time to support them, you can reduce this extra support so they can practise their target for following 1 ICWs independently.

