

Who understands my child? A one-week check, and what to say when you don't understand

For one week, tick how well each person understands your child and note an example. Bring this sheet to your speech-language pathologist or doctor. This sheet is not a diagnosis.

Who is listening	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	An example, a hard word
Me	☐	☐	☐	☐	
The other parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Close family	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Extended family	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Daycare or school	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Strangers	☐	☐	☐	☐	

When you don't understand: five steps

1. Repeat what you understood: "You want... the what?"
2. A yes-or-no question, or a choice: "The truck or the ball?"
3. Ask them to show you: "Show me."
4. Ask them to say it another way: "Tell me another way."
5. Take the blame yourself: "My ears didn't catch that. Let's try again later?"

Get an assessment if...

- Around 3, you yourself often don't understand your child
- After 4, strangers understand less than half of what they say
- They get upset or avoid talking because they aren't understood
- They lose words, or you're worried

At home: say the word back correctly instead of making them repeat it, and never pretend you understood. Have hearing checked too: an audiologist sees you without a referral.

Sources: Hustad et al. (2021); McLeod et al. (2012); Naître et grandir (2024, 2025); RCSLT (2024). General information: this sheet does not replace an assessment.