

The Storyteller

Verbal Reasoning

About The Storyteller

The Storyteller in your brain is great at talking and listening. They listen carefully to what people say, and work out what those words really mean. Your Storyteller helps you follow what's happening in a story, a lesson, or a conversation. They also help you explain your thoughts and ideas clearly. They help you choose your words, and how to use them, so other people know what you mean.

When your Storyteller gets muddled

If your Storyteller gets a bit muddled, you might find:

- Find it hard to understand what people are saying
- Not be sure what a question means
- Struggle to follow instructions
- Lose track of what people are saying
- Forget things you've just been told
- Find it tricky to learn new words
- Have trouble joining words together to make sentences or stories.
- Find talking to people hard work. You have to concentrate a lot when talking and listening.
- Find it hard to put your ideas into words
- Notice other people don't get what you are trying to say
- Find reading and writing more difficult.

What you can do to help your Storyteller

- If you don't understand, it's okay to ask for help. You can say "can you say that again?" or "I need help"
- Ask for more time to think or answer
- Ask people to *show* you as well as tell you
- Say instructions back to check you got them right
- Use actions, your face, drawings, and pictures to help explain what you mean.
- Use pictures, symbols, drawings and diagrams to help you learn – not just words on a page.
- If you need to talk about something tricky, try to do it somewhere quiet, and when you are calm. It is always harder to say what you mean when it is noisy, or when you are feeling upset.

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person

What other people can do to help your Storyteller

Environmental

- Build in regular time for talking to them one-to-one. This helps to make sure they have opportunities to talk to you (to ask for help, explain worries, or just for fun!). They might find it hard to find these opportunities in a busy day with people are talking too quickly.
- Busy, noisy environments can make it harder for your child to use and understand language, especially if there are lots of people talking at once.
- Remember: to use and understand language you need to be able to focus your attention, and remember what was said. If these are tricky, look at information on the Spy (attention) and Helper (working memory)
- Build visual information into the environment. For example, use visual timetables, use symbols (not just words), and use pictures to show where you're going.
- Don't just ask questions – make lots of comments too. Comments show them how to use language, and invites them to comment too, without putting them on the spot.

If your child has difficulties understanding language

- Make sure you have their full attention before speaking to them. Reduce distractions
- Give short, clear instructions. Breaking it down into bite sized bits, given one at a time
- Face them, and speak slowly and clearly. Pause between sentences, and after you have finished speaking, give the person time to process
- Think before you speak. The more effort you put into making your language clear, the easier it will be for them to understand.
- Don't just talk – use visuals. These could be photos, diagrams, symbols, etc. This gives the person extra clues to work out what you are trying to explain
- Ask them to repeat back what you've said, to make sure they understood
- Don't just say it, **show it**. Use mind maps, diagrams, pictures, charts, symbols, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Giving them visual information this way helps them decode what you are saying with words.

If your child has difficulties using language

- Make sure people know **how** they ask for help. Remember – this might not be with words
- Give them time to speak – be patient, and don't assume a pause means they have finished
- If they are struggling to find the words, give them time to think (try to wait 10 seconds)
- Don't guess what they are trying to say. It will be more helpful to ask them questions around it e.g. "where would you find it?" or "what does it look like?"
- If someone is upset or stressed, it is harder for them to find the right words. Try to help them feel calm before having important or complicated conversations
- Support them to use mind maps to remember information and organise their thoughts
- Encourage them to show you, not just tell you. E.g, on holiday, encourage them to take lots of photos so they can show people the photos and use them talk about the holiday.
- If you're trying to help them learn a word, you will need to explain it, repeat it and demonstrate it in lots of different ways and contexts.

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person