

Where can I find out more?

- www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/paediatric-speech-and-language-therapy/objects-reference#ca054e3d
- www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-advice/communication/objects-of-reference/

Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy

Telephone: 01202 443208

Email: dhc.slt.queries@nhs.net

Web: www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk

The information in this leaflet is available in additional languages and alternative formats. Please contact the Trust for further details.

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**Dorset HealthCare
University**
NHS Foundation Trust

Objects of reference to support your child



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Information for patients, relatives and carers

★ Excellence
♥ Compassion
🕒 Expertise
in all we do

What does objects of reference mean?

The use of 'objects of reference' is a simple but powerful and highly effective communication tool. Using objects as a visual cue for your child helps in the following ways:

- By helping your child anticipate (guess) what is going to happen next.
- Helping them understand spoken words.
- Supporting them to understand everyday routines.
- Giving your child the opportunity to bridge the gap of recognising objects to recognising photos.

How do I prepare to use objects of reference?

Find objects that represent activities, places or persons that exist in your child's day. Where possible a real object is best. For example:



A real object, for example a nappy to represent going to the toilet.



Miniature objects, for example a house to represent that it is time to go home.



A small part of a real object, like a small piece of a towel for bath time.



Abstract objects, for example a silk scarf to represent a particular person.

Make the object as meaningful and as relevant to your child and the activity as you can. You will be using these everyday, so the more portable and easily accessible they are the better.

Decide on the word you will all use for this activity because everyone caring for your child needs to use the same single word for each object of reference. This gives your child the best chance of becoming familiar with them and to learn.

The objects can be stored in a bag or box and needs to be wherever your child is. Consider whether the object will be easy to replace if broken or lost.

Attach a clear photo of the person, event or place that the object represents and attach to the object.



How do I introduce the object of reference to my child?

Show and give the object to your child. Name it. Let the child feel it, touch it and give time for your child to experience it and respond if necessary.

Next, take them directly to that activity, place or person.

Initially start with 3-5 objects, with a view to building up to using one whenever you are changing activity. This will prepare your child for change. Used consistently it will help your child to link the object with the spoken word and the activity.

The key to success for objects of reference is regular use and consistency to give your child the best opportunity to make the connection between the object and the activity.