

4 Program Information: Individual Sessions

4.1 Section Overview

In this section of the handbook, you will find a guide to the elements that make up each individual session. This section contains:

- an overview of the core individual session elements
- a structure for the introduction and narrative elements of each teaching session
- timing guidance for the individual sessions.

4.2 Individual Session Elements

Individual sessions enable you to concentrate on a student's individual needs and you will therefore need to tailor each individual session to the needs of the student. To help you to do this, we have provided:

- a session structure for you to use when planning these sessions (mainly for vocabulary and narrative)
- some materials to use in each session.

4.2.1 Listening

As developing listening skills is a vital part of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention, Ted's Listening Rules should be used in the individual sessions as well. The rules are briefly revised at the beginning of every individual session focusing on the skill a student had most difficulties with. You will not be able to award the Best Listener in an individual session but you can give the student praise for using the Listening Rules.

4.2.2 Introduction

The introduction can follow the same pattern as the group sessions except for reference to the Best Listener award. Please try to carry out a sound game in this part of the session. See the **Listening Games Bank** on pages 109–114 for some ideas. The introduction is an opportunity for you to quickly settle the student into the session, revise the Listening Rules and the days of week, and encourage good listening.

4.2.3 Vocabulary Revision

Aim

In this section of the individual session you should aim to revise the vocabulary covered in the previous one or two group sessions. If the student has had difficulties with specific words, use this time to focus on those words.

If a student has had difficulties with specific words that were taught earlier in the program (i.e. not only those words covered in the previous one or two group sessions), you could also revisit those words again.

If a student has been missing group sessions (e.g. due to illness), this section of the individual sessions can also be an opportunity to introduce the student to the new Special Words they have missed.

Instructions

For words you feel the student knows following the group session, work as follows:

- Use the **picture prompts** (flashcards) and materials from the appropriate group session to revise the word.
- Show the prompt and ask the student for the word.
- If they struggle to find the word, try to help the student to retrieve the word by describing the target word (semantic help) or telling the student the first sound of the target word (phonological help).
- If the student still struggles to find the word, tell them the word you are looking for.
- Make a note that this word might need to be revisited in the next individual session.
- Encourage the student to think about the word in different contexts. For example, if you are revising the word 'button', you might want to ask the student where else they might see a button apart from on clothes, e.g. on computers, on telephones, on the TV, etc. If you are revising a verb, e.g. 'throw', you might want to introduce the student to the past tense or present tense, as in "Yesterday I threw the ball" and "I am throwing the ball". Show the student the original flashcard and write down the new form of the verb so they can see that it looks different.
- You might also want to think about alternative contexts, e.g. "I threw a party", "I threw this away", etc. (see 'Advanced uses of vocabulary' in Table 2.1, pages 9–12 for some ideas).

For words you feel the student had difficulty with in the group session, work as follows:

- Use the **picture prompts** (flashcards) and materials from the group session to remind the student of the word.
- Show the student the picture prompt and materials from the group session and say the word. Use real objects as examples of the word if you feel it is appropriate.
- Ask the student to point to the picture/item and repeat the word.
- Ask the student to close their eyes and think about the picture or item they have just seen while saying the word out loud.
- Repeat both of these steps a number of times to encourage overlearning.
- Give the student the definition of the word.
- Talk about the word in the context in which it has been taught, e.g. if you are revising 'sleeve' ask, "Have you got a sleeve?", "Is it a long sleeve or a short sleeve?", "What other things might have sleeves?" (e.g. jumper, coat, shirt) and "What do we do with our sleeves when it is hot or when we are going to do some painting?"
- Make a note to revise this word in the next individual session.

4.2.4 Narrative Task

Aim

This task gives you the opportunity to help develop the student's story-telling skills. The task is divided into two sections and is carried out over two sessions in each week.

Instructions

First session each week:

- Choose either a **three-sequence picture story** (10 stories provided) or a **personal event narrative prompt card** (6 cards provided) from the **individual session materials**.
- Place the picture sequence or narrative prompt on the table in front of the student.
- For picture sequences, say to the student, “*These pictures tell a story. The story starts here* (point to picture 1) *and finishes here* (point to picture 3). *Can you try telling me the story?*”
- If the student has difficulty starting the story, you can use prompts such as “*What is happening in the first picture?*” to get them started.
- Give non-specific prompts to encourage the student such as “*mmm ..., yes ...,*” etc.
- If the student has difficulty moving on from picture to picture, you can guide them by asking “*What is happening in the next picture?*” and “*What is happening in this picture?*” (pointing at appropriate picture). See also Box 4.1 for personal event narrative instructions.
- For narrative prompts, say to the student, “*Can you tell me what is happening in this picture?*” Give the student as much information as they need so that they are fully aware of what the picture is showing. Ask the student if they have ever experienced what the picture is showing, e.g. “*Have you ever been to the doctor?*”, “*Have you ever been swimming?*” Then ask them to tell you about it, giving them some support when needed.
- Try not to give the student too much specific help at this point. You want to see what the student can produce independently.
- Use the first narrative section of the **Part 1 Individual Sessions: Record Sheet** (see page 105) to write down or record the story exactly as the student says it.
- If a student gives you very little information, you could ask them simply to describe the pictures after noting down the student’s original story to work on in the second session of the week. You could also start working on the more general story work (general sequencing, story elements). In the second session of the week, you can then build on the student’s original story as well as the picture description.

Second session each week:

- In this session you will revisit the student’s story and try to work on areas the student struggled with.
- Put the **three-sequence picture story** or **personal event narrative prompt card** in front of the student and ask if they remember telling the story. Then read their story back to them.
- Say to the student, “*That was a good story. Let’s see if we can make it even better.*”
- In the **Part 1 Individual Sessions: Record Sheet** (page 105) you should have identified a few teaching points to work on at this point. For example:
 - If the student had difficulties with sequencing the story, point out the beginning, middle and end pictures for them.
 - If the student did not use full sentences, try to model their story into full sentences.
 - For a three-sequence picture story, if the student did not make connections between the pictures, run through the story with the student using connectives and asking questions such as, “*Why did that happen?*”
 - If the student used incorrect word forms (e.g. ‘broked’ instead of ‘broken’), model the sentence again using correct word forms.
 - Encourage the student to elaborate on the story, e.g. “*What might happen next?*”
- Use the second narrative section of the **Part 1 Individual Sessions: Record Sheet** to write down the student’s story again. You will then have a record of the student’s progress in their narrative skills between the first and second sessions of the week.

- NOTE: If you think the student would benefit from revisiting the same story again to work on different teaching points, you can use the story in more than two sessions. However, we would advise that the stories are not used for more than three or four sessions so that students experience different stories.

Box 4.1: Personal event narratives

(instructions adapted from Dockrell & Stuart, 2007, *Talking Time*)

The personal event narrative activity is a good opportunity to encourage independent speaking and narrative skills and to use modelling of correct speech and story structure.

Encourage students to talk about the pictures/topic. Use questions to encourage conversation, e.g. “What can we see here?”, “What is happening?”, “I wonder why they did that?”, “Who do you think that was?”, etc. Model correct responses, so if a student says, “Boy go shop”, you might say, “Yes, the boy is going to the shop”.

When you are working with a picture sequence and you have talked about the first picture, repeat for the remaining two pictures. As you introduce the pictures, summarise what you have talked about so far. When you have finished, tell the story again. Then you can ask students to tell the story. Perhaps they could tell the story to Ted!

As you move through the program, you can increase the complexity of the story by adding more pictures to the sequence or encouraging students to produce longer stories.

For example, you may want to revisit a story and think about alternative events.

4.3 Tailoring Individual Sessions to a Student’s Needs

Each session will last 15 minutes and will focus on key vocabulary and narrative skills. What you will need to do is to decide how to tailor your sessions.

If a student is confident with the new vocabulary you have been teaching, you might want to give them examples of using the vocabulary in different ways, e.g. different verb tenses, different contexts, related words etc. Table 2.1 (see pages 9–12) gives you some ideas of the different verb endings and different contexts you might want to introduce. You could say, for example, “*One of our Special Words was **young**. Do you know people who are **younger** than you? Who is the **youngest** in your family?*” or “*We have learned the word **help** and we heard the story about a **postie**’s busy day, when the **postie** needed **help** from his friends. Can you think of other times when people may need **help**? Have you ever **helped** someone, or needed **help** with something?*”

If a student is confident about naming the new vocabulary, you could try to deepen their knowledge of the Special Word, e.g. you could ask the student for a kind of definition of the Special Word. You could say, for example, “*Yes, that’s right – these are **leaves**. Can you tell me what a **leaf** is? Where can you find **leaves**? What do **leaves** look like? What can you do with **leaves**?*”

In the narrative task, you might need to concentrate on the basic concepts of beginning, middle and end with some students, but others may be able to think about using different story starts or including dialogue. As the program runs its course, you will be able to use your notes, observations and impressions of individual students in the group to help you to plan individual sessions.