Following instructions

Developed by Dr Ian Corban, Educational Psychologist

6 weeks | 12 sessions | 2-4 pupils | 15-20 minutes per session

Years 1-4 - suggested starting phase; match to skills, not age alone.

The learning goal

Carry out short classroom instructions, using repetition or a visual sequence when needed, and ask for clarification when information is missing.

Everything in one pack

A TA guide, six-week overview and evidence notes.

Twelve session plans, each with a pupil activity sheet.

Starting, midpoint and final checks with scoring keys.

Individual session records, progress chart and teacher/SENCo summary.

Reusable tools and a classroom-transfer observation form.

Before you begin

Agree the starting point, access arrangements and classroom link with the teacher. Print one pupil sheet and one individual record per pupil. Materials can be photocopied for a group of up to six; the recommended teaching group is shown above.

Evidence-informed original resources. This programme has not been independently evaluated. The schedule is a practical plan, not a validated dosage or guarantee of progress.

https://daybydaytools.co.uk/programmes/following-instructions.html

Choose the right starting point

Entry skills and access

Can identify a pencil, book, cup and counter and access a simple spoken or signed instruction. Check hearing access, language understanding and motor demands first.

Materials and preparation

Pencil, book, cup, paper, two counters, ruler; one set per pupil. Adult reads task cards; print a pupil sheet per session.

Teacher and TA agreement

Choose one classroom goal and a realistic time to observe it. Arrange two sessions a week, avoiding repeated loss of essential class teaching. Give the TA time to read the plan and rehearse the model. Check local SEND, safeguarding and curriculum arrangements.

A predictable session

Prepare and retrieve: 2 minutes. Adult model: 3 minutes. Guided and individual practice: the remaining time, reserving 2-3 minutes to record and review. Adjust for the session length on the cover; repeat a session if needed.

Keep every pupil involved

Give each pupil their own materials. Rotate the first responder. Allow processing time and a communication choice. Use paired practice only after modelling; a confident pupil should not answer for everyone. Offer individual delivery where group demands prevent access.

Access route

Adult may read directions. Accept speech, signing, pointing, AAC, drawing or exact adult scribing where appropriate to the skill.

Limits and safeguards

This is support for understanding and using instructions, not a test or training course for general working-memory capacity.

Six-week teaching sequence

Starting check A: before any teaching. Midpoint check C: at the start of session 6. Final check B: at the start of session 12. Use the same access arrangements. Checks replace some practice time; do not rush them.

Week	First session	Second session
1	1. One clear action	2. Two actions in order
2	3. Where does it go?	4. Listen for the describing word
3	5. Say it, then do it	6. Check and consolidate
4	7. Ask rather than guess	8. Follow a visual sequence
5	9. Before and after	10. Instructions in a lesson
6	11. Choose the right support	12. Use, review and share

Pace follows learning

This is a six-week plan, not a deadline. Revisit an earlier step, reduce the number range or change the access route if necessary. Record any change; adapted checks are not directly comparable with the original version.

Keep a classroom connection

Each session names one transfer opportunity. Agree this with the teacher before expecting it to happen. Observe one relevant action in ordinary work; do not assume a good group score means the skill transfers.

Evidence behind the design

Developed by Dr Ian Corban, Educational Psychologist

Research into the approach

Uses short language, demonstration, rehearsal and a gradual reduction in adult prompts. These choices apply oral-language and explicit-teaching principles.

What this means in the pack

A worked example makes the learning visible. Pupils practise with feedback, then try with less prompting. Checks inform what to teach next; classroom observations test whether support is useful beyond the group.

What is not established

The sources below support teaching principles, not the effectiveness of this particular pack. There is no independent trial, standardised score, norm group or proven six-week outcome for this programme. Do not apply average research effect sizes to its results.

EEF. Oral language interventions, Teaching and Learning Toolkit
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/oral-language-interventions

EEF (2020). Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/SEND

Sources checked: 24 October 2026. Original teaching activities and local checks; no endorsement by the cited organisations is implied.

Measure progress consistently

The target being measured

Five instruction tasks: score completion of every stated element in the stated order. Record repetition, visual aids and language of delivery.

Starting, midpoint and final checks

Use A before session 1, C at session 6 and B before session 12. Administer individually, away from peer answers. Present each item once; allow processing time. Record the first response before feedback. Then offer a prompt or model to identify support needs. Do not teach the check items in advance.

Record outcome and support separately

Code	Support needed
I	Correct on first attempt with agreed access aids; no item-specific adult cue.
P	Correct after a general cue, repeat or clarification.
M	Correct after demonstration or a specific answer cue.
N	Not correct after support, declined or not attempted; note which.

For each item, correct = 1 for I, P or M; otherwise 0. Independent correct = 1 only for I. Both totals are out of five. Usual AAC, glasses, agreed visual aids and exact scribing are access arrangements, not automatically prompts. Record them so conditions can be matched.

A declined/not-attempted item is not evidence of inability. Keep N in the record and describe the reason; do not interpret incomplete checks as a comparable ability score.

Interpreting change

Compare correct /5 and independent /5, inspect item-level responses, attendance and access conditions. A one-item change may reflect task difficulty or normal variation. These alternate tasks sample similar skills but are not standardised or proven equivalent. Do not report ages, percentiles or causal effects.

Assessment keys and decisions

One point for a response that meets the key; accept equivalent wording and valid alternatives. Do not require the exact printed phrase. Score the named construct only.

A - starting check

1. Touches pencil.
2. Both in order.
3. Under book.
4. Both in order.
5. Which object/where or equivalent.

C - midpoint check

1. Touches ruler.
2. Both in order.
3. Under paper.
4. Both in order.
5. Where or equivalent.

B - final check

1. Touches cup.
2. Both in order.
3. Under cup.
4. Both in order.
5. Which object or equivalent.

Teaching decisions, not diagnostic cut-offs

A practical local rule: move on when the pupil completes most tasks independently on two occasions and shows the skill in class. Four of five independent responses can start that discussion; it is not a validated threshold. Otherwise revisit the specific barrier, model again or adapt support. Persistent difficulty or distress requires teacher/SENCo review, not repeated testing.

Check A - starting

Pupil code: _____ Date: _____ Adult: _____

Adult: Adult may read directions. Accept speech, signing, pointing, AAC, drawing or exact adult scribing where appropriate to the skill.

Access route / usual aids: _____

1. Touch the pencil.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

2. Touch the book, then lift the cup.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

3. Put a counter under the book.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

4. Turn the paper over, then touch the ruler.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

5. Adult says "Put it there" without pointing. What could you ask?

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

Correct: ____ /5 Independent correct: ____ /5 Completed: yes / no

Notes / declined items / changed conditions: _____

Check C - midpoint

Pupil code: _____ Date: _____ Adult: _____

Adult: Adult may read directions. Accept speech, signing, pointing, AAC, drawing or exact adult scribing where appropriate to the skill.

Access route / usual aids: _____

1. Touch the ruler.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

2. Touch the cup, then lift the pencil.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

3. Put a counter under the paper.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

4. Lift the book, then touch the cup.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

5. Adult says "Put the cup there" without showing a place. What could you ask?

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

Correct: ____ /5 Independent correct: ____ /5 Completed: yes / no

Notes / declined items / changed conditions: _____

Check B - final

Pupil code: _____ Date: _____ Adult: _____

Adult: Adult may read directions. Accept speech, signing, pointing, AAC, drawing or exact adult scribing where appropriate to the skill.

Access route / usual aids: _____

1. Touch the cup.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

2. Touch the ruler, then lift the book.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

3. Put a counter under the cup.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

4. Turn the book over, then touch the pencil.

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

5. Adult says "Get that" without pointing. What could you ask?

Adult record: I / P / M / N First response / note: _____

Correct: ____ /5 Independent correct: ____ /5 Completed: yes / no

Notes / declined items / changed conditions: _____

Individual session record

Pupil code: _____ Teacher: _____ TA: _____

Classroom goal: _____

Agreed aids/access route: _____

I = independent correct; P = prompted correct; M = modelled correct; N = not correct/declined/not attempted. Explain N. Attendance: present / absent / partial.

Session / date	Attendance	Codes 1-5	Correct /5	Indep. /5
01 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
02 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
03 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
04 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
05 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
06 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
07 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
08 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
09 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
10 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
11 / _____	_____	_____	___	___
12 / _____	_____	_____	___	___

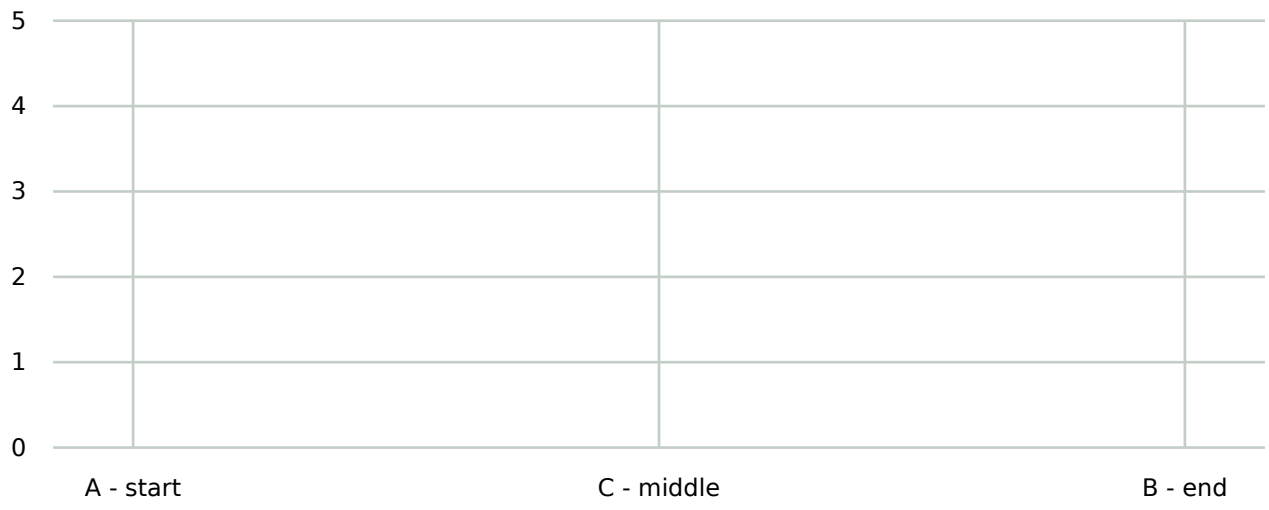
Attendance, changes, useful prompts and pupil preferences

Progress at a glance

Pupil code: _____ Group period: _____

Check / date	Correct /5	Independent /5	Access matched?
A / _____	___	___	Yes / no
C / _____	___	___	Yes / no
B / _____	___	___	Yes / no

Plot independent-correct totals. Checks use fresh items; session scores include supported practice. Do not combine these into one trend line.



What does the pattern suggest?

Skill learned / support reduced / uncertain or mixed evidence

Conditions or attendance that affect interpretation

Classroom-transfer observation

Pupil code: _____ Observer: _____

Observe during normal work; do not create an upsetting or inaccessible situation just to obtain a score.

Before the programme

Date, lesson and planned opportunity

What the pupil did; aids and adult prompts used

During the programme

Date, lesson and planned opportunity

What the pupil did; aids and adult prompts used

After the programme

Date, lesson and planned opportunity

What the pupil did; aids and adult prompts used

Record: demonstrated / not yet / no opportunity. No opportunity is not a failed skill. Report context-specific observations rather than assuming transfer to every lesson.

Teacher / SENCo feedback

Pupil code: _____ Class: _____ TA: _____

Dates: _____ Sessions attended: ____ /12 Partial: _____

Measure	Starting A	Midpoint C	Final B
Correct /5	____	____	____
Independent /5	____	____	____
Access matched?	Baseline	Yes / no	Yes / no

What the pupil can now do - include an example

Evidence in class, or no opportunity yet

Support still needed / access adjustments to continue

Pupil view or preference - include choice not to comment

Agreed next step, responsible adult and review date

Decision: continue / adapt / consolidate / move on / seek further advice. These local scores describe observed performance; they are not standardised or proof that the programme caused change.

Reusable tools

My plan / practice card

The goal or message

My first step

A support or strategy I can choose

How I will check

Where I could use this in class

Adult may scribe exactly. Keep the card specific to the taught skill rather than using it as a general behaviour chart.

Keep this programme handy

Return to this programme

Scan the QR code or use the visible, clickable address below for the programme page, session sheets and records.

https://daybydaytools.co.uk/programmes/following-instructions.html

More classroom resources

daybydaytools.co.uk
https://daybydaytools.co.uk/
Printable resources, small-group programmes and interactive classroom tools.

Practical guidance for schools

epforschools.co.uk
https://epforschools.co.uk/
Practical articles for teachers, teaching assistants and SENCos.

Advice and assessments

corbanpsychology.com
https://corbanpsychology.com/
Information about Dr Ian Corban, Educational Psychologist, and services for schools and parents.

Choose further support according to the pupil's needs and school arrangements. This pack supports teaching; its local checks are not diagnostic or standardised.