Introducing a New Sound

This booklet explains the steps that children need to go through to start using a new sound.

Your Speech and Language Therapist will let you know where to start, so that you can focus on activities from that stage. You can, however, use activity ideas from an earlier stage to enable your child to be successful, and to reinforce what they have already learnt.

## What are speech sound difficulties?

Speech sounds make up spoken words. When talking, we need to be able to pronounce the sounds in words accurately, and in the right order, so that we are understood. Children’s development of speech sounds is a gradual process, usually lasting the first four to five years. Most children follow a similar pattern, beginning with babbling and more difficult sounds emerging later (see Table A for more details).

Development of speech sounds

Children vary a great deal in the acquisition of speech sounds. This is a complex process which starts during the first year and continues until the child reaches school age. The following is a guide to the development of sound awareness skills and the ages these skills usually develop:

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| **Age** | **Typical Speech Sound Development** |
| Under 1 year | Babies experiment with a wide variety of sounds from about 5 months old. This is called ‘babble’ e.g. dadada, bububu.  |
| 1-2 years | A child’s first words begin to appear at around the end of the first year. The range of sounds may now reduce as they try to use specific sounds. The early words may sound unclear e.g. ‘doh’ for dog.  |
| 2 years | Your child may start to use lip sounds: p, b, m, w, and tongue-tip sounds: t, d, n. It is common for consonants at the ends of words to be missed off at this stage, and because of the limited range of speech sounds, many words may appear similar, e.g. “da” may be used for ‘that’, ‘daddy’, ‘cat’, ‘car’, etc. |
| 3 years | Your child will start using back sounds: k, g, ng, h and some hissy sounds: s, f. As their range of sounds increases, their speech sounds becomes more recognisable and easier to understand. Consonant clusters, such as ‘sp’, ‘pl’, and ‘fl’ may be simplified, so that “spoon” becomes, ‘poon’, “plane” becomes ‘pane’, etc. |
| 4 years | Your child will introduce sounds: l, y and more advanced sounds: sh, ch, j, v, z. They will also develop consonant clusters e.g. bl, st. They may use similar sounds interchangeably e.g. “wing” for ‘ring’, “les” for ‘yes’. The child should now be intelligible when speaking in and out of context, and to people outside of the family. Simple mistakes may still be made. |
| 5 years | The child should have an almost complete range of speech sounds. Complex consonant clusters, such as ‘str’ in “string” and ‘spl’ in “splash” should be present. Some immaturities may persist, e.g. with ‘r’ and ‘th’. These may also be a result of regional accents. |

Some children have difficulties with speech sounds development, making their speech difficult to understand. Speech and Language Therapists describe these difficulties as a ***speech delay***, where the child’s error patterns are similar to that of a younger child, or a ***speech disorder***, where the error pattern is not in line with expected speech development.

Why do children have difficulties with speech sounds?

For the majority of children, their speech sound difficulties have no identifiable cause. Other causes include:

* hearing infections e.g. glue ear
* hearing loss
* frequent dummy at 2-3 years old
* physical difficulties e.g. cleft palate
* cerebal palsy
* some genetic conditions and learning difficulties e.g. global developmental delay.

Tongue ties or gaps in teeth are very unlikely to cause ongoing difficulties with speech sounds.

## How to identify a child with speech sound difficulties.

They might…

* **Mix up the sounds in words** (e.g. saying ‘tat’ for ‘cat’)
* Have **difficulty saying specific speech sounds**. This can range from saying Individual sounds e.g. when saying ‘t’ on its own to difficulties saying the word in a sentence, e.g. ‘I had to look in the telescope’
* Be **unable to imitate particular sounds**, or groups of sounds
* Have **difficulty sequencing speech sounds** within words and sentences
* **Leave sounds out** of words, or miss off the ends of words
* You might find it **difficult understanding what they are trying to say** or their speech may sound like that of a younger child
* The child may be **reluctant to talk** if they are aware of their speech difficulties

Strategies to help develop speech sounds

*General advice:*

* **Encourage** your child to speak freely in the way that is easiest for them. Never be critical of your child’s attempts at speech or insist on correct productions of sounds
* **Stop and wait** – give the child the space to have a go, and see if they repeat it on their own. Many children will, but it’s important that they do not feel forced to repeat the word.
* **Praise** all attempts – tell them when they said the word correctly, and if they repeat with an error then praise them for having a go
* Provide your child with **accurate feedback**. If you have understood a small part of what has been said, show them which information has been clear enough for you to understand, and which hasn’t. e.g. ‘You are telling me about your train. What happened?’ In this way the child immediately realises which part of the communication needs to be clarified.
* **Model** the correct production. If your child is mispronouncing a word, model the word back to them, placing stress on the sound they mispronounced. e.g. if your child says ‘tup a tea’ you may say ‘Would you like a cup of tea? I made you a cup of tea’

*Working on specific sounds:*

If your child is finding a specific sound, or group of sounds difficult, the activities below can help them to master the sound. A Speech and Language Therapist will be able to tell you which specific sounds your child is finding difficult and provide a program to support the development of these sounds. A typical speech program will likely follow the following stages…

1. Listening for the sound

Try to encourage the child to listen to the sounds so they can begin to tell them apart. Ask them to look at you as you say them so that they can see how the sounds are made. They may start to copy and articulate the sound.

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| Information | Activities  |
| * Make sure they can hear the difference between sounds
* Start with the sound by itself, e.g. “ssss” not “suh” or “esss”
* Then move onto words that begin with the sound
* If children identify word correctly, repeat the sound
* If they are incorrect, emphasise the sound in words, e.g. “sssocks”; show the action and picture if necessary.
 | * **Towers Game:** Say a sound/word. The child puts a brick on Jolly Phonics picture heard (If using words, this would be the first sound)
* **Finger Puppets:** Say a sound/word for the child to jump finger puppets onto a Jolly Phonics picture card
* **Sorting Sounds:** Put each Jolly Phonics picture in several baskets. Ask the child to throw ball into basket containing the sound they heard
* **Listen to the Sounds in Words:** Say different sound or words beginning with different sounds for the child to clap/stamp feet when they hear the sound you’ve asked them to listen out for
* **Stepping Stones:** Put Jolly Phonics pictures on the floor and ask the child to jump onto the picture showing the sound they hear to get across the river
* **Post boxes:** Put each Jolly Phonics picture onto a post box and ask the child to put counter into the box that has the sound they heard.
* **Beanbag Game:** place sound pictures on different boxes and ask the child to throw the beanbag into the correct box. This can also be done with balls or even socks tied into a knot!
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2. Say the Target Sound by Itself

Your Speech and Language Therapist will help your child to say the sounds they are finding difficult, by showing them where to place their tongue, teeth and lips. Once your child can say the sounds, practise the sounds using the following game ideas.

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| Information | Activities  |
| * Children need lots of opportunity to practice saying the sound by itself to get used to moving their mouth in this way
* Encourage children to listen to the sound they produce and point to the Jolly Phonics picture matching that sound
* Give feedback about the sound they make and provide an opportunity for them to say the sound again if necessary
 | * **Turn-taking games:** e.g. Pop-Up Pirate, Snakes and Ladders, where each person says the sound before taking their turn
* **Blowing Bubbles:** the child says the target sound for each bubble they burst
* **Ball Games:** Play catch with a ball and each time they catch the ball, say the target sound; also, each time they say the target sound, throw a ball into a target
* **Listening Games:** Using games from Stage 1, take it in turns to be “teachers” so the child has the chance to tell you what to do
* **Pairs Game:** take turns to pick up sound pictures and try to find matching pairs. Each time you choose a card, say the sound that you find
* **Hiding Game:** Hide sounds in/under different containers e.g. tins, books or boxes. Take turns telling each other to find different items or hide them in certain places
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1. Say the Target Sound with a Vowel

Once the child can produce the sound on its own consistently, they can start to try to join it with a vowel sound in a nonsense word. For example, if the child is working on ‘k’, they can make nonsense words with ‘k’ at the beginning, such as: k + ee = kee. They can also make nonsense words with the sound at the end, such as ‘eek’ or ‘ook’. Once they can use the sound at the beginning and end of nonsense words, they are ready to try producing that word in real words in the activities below.

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| Information | Activities  |
| * Once the child can say the sound in isolation, practise the sound with a vowel
* Regular practise is key
* Say the two sounds separately, e.g. “b-oo”, then reduce the gap between the sounds until they are blended, e.g. “boo”
* Put the vowel before and after the new sound
* When able to blend the sound with vowels, put 2 together, e.g. “seesoo”
* Alternate target consonants and vowels with other consonant sounds plus vowels the child can say –this allows the child to vary the use of their articulatory muscles and for them to get used to saying these sounds as they would for real words.
 | * **Turn-taking games:** e.g. Pop-up Pirates, Snakes and Ladders, each person says a “silly word” before taking their turn
* **Hiding Games:** Write “silly words” onto cards and hide them around the room; when the child finds a card, read it for them to copy. If they find this difficult put a gap between the new sound and vowel
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| **Vowel Sounds** |
| Long SoundsLonger vowels may be easier to begin with | Short Vowels |
| FurCoreCar | DoughFearFair | BlueFeetRoom | EyeBoyCow | SingBedCat | FitClockUp | DogInSit | BigLookHot |

1. Say the Sound at the Beginning/End of a Word

These games all give the child many chances to hear their new sound in different words, and opportunities to try to use it. Start with short words containing the new sound (e.g. ‘car’, ‘cow’, ‘key’ before moving on to longer ones like ‘caravan’).

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| Information | Activities  |
| * Use pictures of words beginning/ ending with target sound
* Introduce pictures to the child
* Play games using the pictures and take turns so the child can hear you say the word
* Encourage the child to listen to the sound they said and point to the Jolly phonics picture matching the sound
* Give feedback and time to say the word again if necessary
* If the child is having difficulty, encourage them to say the sound on its own or with a vowel
* Say the word for them to hear
 | * **Lotto Game:** need 2 sets of pictures. Turn over a picture, name it and match it to your board
* **Pairs Game:** need two sets of pictures. Turn over 2 pictures and name them. Keep the pairs
* **Snap:** need 2 sets of pictures. As you play snap name the pictures as you put them down
* **Jumping frogs:** Put the pictures face down, jump frog onto a picture and name it. Collect pictures to see who gets the most
* **Kim’s Game:** Show pictures and take one/all away to see if child can remember it
* **Shopping Game:** write a silly shopping list for the child to go to the shop and fill up their basket
* **Scrapbook/Posters:** collect pictures of items that contain the target sound and make these into scrapbooks or posters that you can look at together
* **Snakes and Ladders:** place images on the different squares of the board game, and the child has to say the words that they land on
* **Dice Games**: pictures can be stuck onto cubes/dice and they must say the word that they land on
* **Skittles:** Pictures are attached to skittles and they must try to knock them all down!
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1. Say these Words in Phrases
* When the child can say sound in words, move onto saying two words together
* Initially, the other word should not include the sound, e.g. if sound is “s” , the other word shouldn’t have an “s”
* Other word can be a describing word, e.g. colour, shape, size, number, to say phrases such as “red sock”, “big saw”, “two suns”
* Use games similar to stage 4 where each player says two words about the pictures, e.g. Lotto, Pairs, Snap, Jumping Frogs, Kim’s Game, Shopping Game, Hiding Game
1. Say these Words in Sentences

Even if they can use the sound in words, a child might need support before they can use it in sentences or conversation. If they mispronounce a word whilst playing one of the games, try asking: ‘did that sound right?’ or ‘can you change that?’. The idea is to encourage the child to listen to their own speech and correct it themselves rather than always relying on an adult’s help. If they can’t change it, just say the word correctly so that they hear good examples.

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| Information | Activities  |
| * When the child can say the word in phrases, try saying the word in a short sentence
* This can be repetitive throughout the game, e.g. “I’ve got a sock”
* Can use the games from stage 4 but each player must say a sentence about the picture, e.g. in Pairs say “I’ve got a \_\_\_and a \_\_\_” and in the Shopping game “Can I have a \_\_\_ please?”
* When the child is confident at saying sentences, try playing games where they must make up a sentence to go with a picture
 | * **Secret Pockets:** Divide the pictures into 6 envelopes and number them. Take turns to roll a dice and take a picture out of a corresponding envelope. Then make up a sentence about the picture in the envelope, e.g. “There was a seal at the beach”
* **Tell me a (Silly) Story:** Choose pictures and place them face down. Turn over a picture and take turns to say a sentence each that follows each other to make a story. They can be as sensible or as silly as you like!
* **Where’s the Spider:** Collect a set of pictures with the target sound and hide a spider (or another animal) picture beneath one of them. See if they can find the right picture!
* **I Went to See…** A variation of the shopping list game, the aim is for them to take items with them when they go to see someone. Each of the items that they take should contain their target sound
* **Reading:** Look for words in books they are reading with the target sound. Get them to say the words on their own first, then build up to the sentence and then the paragraph/ page they are on
* **Conversations:** If they are feeling confident, encourage them to talk about a topic for 1 minute and try to remember their target sound
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Keep practice sessions **short**, **regular** and **fun**!

**5 to 10 minutes** a day will keep you both motivated, but still allow the child to get lots of practice. **Children learn through play so remember to keep talking time fun**

**My Record Sheet**

I will practice \_\_\_\_ times a week.

My reward will be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday** | **Sunday** |
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