







10: Speech

WHEN CHILDREN LEARN SOUNDS

Children usually learn speech sounds in the same order, but some are quicker than others. This is a rough guide to what you can expect:

<p>from birth to 18mths</p> 	<p>Many words will sound very different from how we would say them but, so long as it's a word, the sounds don't really matter at this age. Beginnings and ends of words will often be left off (e.g. 'du' for 'duck') Often, only parents know what the child is saying.</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n m</p>
<p>up to about 2 ½ years</p> 	<p>Some ends of words are still missing but many are now being used. Often, the last sound of the word is made the same as the first so that 'dog' may be 'dod' or 'gog'.</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n</p> <p>m</p> <p>w</p> <p>usually f</p> <p>sometimes s</p>
<p>up to about 3 years</p> 	<p>Often, children are still using t & d for c & g so that 'car' becomes 'tar' and 'go' becomes 'doe'. Some children still use a hard sound for a soft, hissy one e.g. 'sea' may be 'dea' and 'farm' may be 'barm'.</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n m w</p> <p>c/k g</p> <p>f v</p> <p>s</p>
<p>up to about 3 ½ years</p> 	<p>Now beginning to use c & g as well as f & v. Where two sounds are together, one of them may be left off, so 'spoon' is 'poon' but 's' may be used in 'house' or 'sun'.</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n m w</p> <p>c/k g</p> <p>f v</p> <p>s z</p>
<p>up to about 4 years</p> 	<p>By now, the c & g are usually fine as well as the f. Some children will still miss off 's' in words like 'spider' and 'snake'. The l, r, y may be left off (as in 'pate' for 'plate') or mixed up (as in 'yion' for 'lion').</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n m w</p> <p>c/k g</p> <p>f v</p> <p>s z</p> <p>sometimes l & r</p>
<p>up to about 5 years</p> 	<p>Most sounds will be correct by now except for r, l and th. Children may still mix up or leave sounds out of longer words such as 'hospital' and 'spaghetti'.</p>	<p>p b</p> <p>t d</p> <p>n m w</p> <p>c/k g</p> <p>f v</p> <p>s z</p> <p>l r y</p> <p>usually s sh ch j</p>
<p>up to 6 years</p>	<p>Many children still have trouble with th, r.</p>	<p>Most sounds now correct</p>

After 6 years	Most children have all their speech sounds correct by now.	All sounds correct
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10.1: Speech sounds: general strategies

Please ensure that your child uses short sentences of around 3-4 words together before working on speech sounds. See section 9 for advice on how to develop this

Young children may not be ready for direct work on speech sounds but parents and nursery staff have an important role in developing their interest in all sorts of sounds, listening and experimenting in making sounds, and using their mouths in different ways. These skills will be very useful for the future if the child needs direct work with a therapist.

When doing these activities, it is best to be face to face with the child. Make sure you have their attention before speaking by saying their name and waiting for them to look at you.

Avoid correcting the child. This will discourage them and they are not wrong, they are just learning and doing their best to be clear. If you can accept their attempt and be positive, by repeating back clearly what they say, they will know then that you have understood and they will have heard a clear model. This will help them to feel successful and confident to keep trying.

e.g. Child says “yoot, a doddy.” You say, “yes, look! It’s a doggie.”

What should I do if I don’t understand the child’s speech?

Don’t worry! It’s a frustrating but inevitable part of children’s speech development that you will sometimes not understand.

Here are some suggestions:

Look for any clues that might help you find out what they are talking about e.g.

- What have they *just* been doing?

What are their interests?

- Look at what they are pointing to.
- Take their hand and say ‘can you show me?’

Let them know you’re listening by looking at them and reflecting back the parts that you *did* understand e.g. ‘you saw something outside? What did you see?’ In this way, they only have to repeat the part you did not understand.

Try and work out the topic e.g. ‘Are you telling me about Grandma/playgroup/Daddy?’

If you don't understand after trying a few times, you could say 'I'm sorry, my ears aren't working very well at the moment. Can you tell me again later?'

If I understand the child but someone else doesn't ...

Look at the child and respond to what they've said by repeating it back so they and the other person can hear. This gives the child the opportunity to confirm or clarify what they said.

Below are some games and activities to help the child develop speech sounds. Choose a good time to play when they are ready to have fun. It's OK for them to just watch and listen; they don't have to join in if they don't want to.

Listen to the sounds you hear around you and encourage the child to guess what it is that they can hear. If you can, copy the sound e.g. "psshhh" when you turn the tap on.

Here are some examples of sounds to listen for in real life. Talk about them in pictures in a book, or draw/collect pictures of them to play with:

- IN THE HOME: water running from tap, water gugging down plughole, clock ticking or alarm ringing, doorbell ringing, letterbox banging, cereal crackling, vacuum cleaner going, brush sweeping, washing machine...
- PEOPLE SOUNDS: laughing, crying, drinking, sneezing, shouting, whispering
- ANIMAL SOUNDS: cat, dog, bee, snake, duck, cow, sheep, pig
- TRANSPORT SOUNDS: car, bus, ambulance, police car, aeroplane...

Raise the child's awareness of sounds in words

Talk to them about sounds you hear at the beginning of words e.g. "I can see something beginning with ssss.... Look, sock, ssssock!" This is easiest with "long" sounds (sss,mmm,fff,nnn) but you can do it with others (e.g. p,b,t,d,k,g).

REMEMBER to say the sound (e.g. 'sss') NOT the letter name (e.g. 'ess') and say the single sound only e.g. 'p' not 'puh' ('puh' is actually the sound 'p' with the vowel 'uh'). The child may not be able to say some sounds yet. Instead of asking them to copy you, it is more helpful for them to listen to you saying the sounds and words.

You could collect a small bag of items with the same first sound and play a hide and seek game with them. You can name each one, emphasising the first sound e.g. sock, soap, sausage, sand.

Encourage the child to join in singing songs and nursery rhymes

Many of these include fun sounds:

- The Wheels on the Bus
- Old McDonald had a Farm
- Wind the Bobbin Up

When doing this, sing/say the word SLOWLY and emphasise the rhythm with your voice. You can clap along too, and encourage the child to clap as well.

Clap out syllables

Find some objects with 2, 3 or 4 syllables. Put them in a bag, ask the child to take one out and name it (don't worry if their speech isn't clear). Say the word back to them so they hear a good model, then clap the syllables in the word: clap and say each syllable at the same time. You can put your hands over theirs and encourage them to clap with you e.g. e – le – phant (three claps).

Rhythm and Rhyme

Activities:

- **Rhyming books:** read rhyming books regularly with the child e.g. Gingerbread Man.
- **Rhyming songs:** sing rhyming songs regularly with the child and encourage them to join in with the actions.
- **Join in with the beat:** encourage the child to listen as you use an instrument to create a beat. Encourage them to join in with the beat e.g. clap, stamp. Make comments about how the beat changes using words such as 'fast' and 'slow' or 'loud' and 'quiet'.
- **Silly Soup:** gather together a bag of objects/pictures that rhyme e.g. cat, bat, sat, fat, mat. Ask the child to add them into a toy saucepan to make a silly soup. Name the objects/pictures for them as they place the items in the saucepan and reiterate that the words rhyme. Change the rhyming words regularly to new examples.
- **Rhyming Bingo:** play rhyming bingo (Available for free on online Education Sites).
- **Rhyming Matching Pairs:** play rhyming matching pairs (Available for free on online Education Sites).
- **Odd one out:** place three objects/pictures in front of the child and ask them to identify which two of them rhyme.