

Speech sounds Preschool and School-aged Children

What can I do to help?

- Respond to *what* your child says, not how they say it. They need to know that you are listening to what they are trying to tell you.
- If your child says a word incorrectly, it is better to model the word emphasising the correct sound but without correcting them so that conversation continues smoothly and they feel successful. Communication should be a positive experience.



- If you don't understand something, repeat back the parts you think you did understand. Your child will tell you if you have got it wrong! Repeating back what you understand encourages them to keep talking and gives them a chance to correct you if necessary. Your child then only has to repeat the part you did not understand rather than saying the whole sentence again.
- If you cannot understand your child, encourage them to show you using actions, mime or pointing. Look for clues that might help you e.g. what have they *just* been doing?



- If you are struggling to understand what your child is telling you and it does not seem to be about the 'here and now', try asking questions to help you 'tune in' e.g. 'are you telling me about playgroup/school?', 'where were you?', 'who was there?', 'what else happened?'
- Children are all different. Some are persistent and are happy to say things a few times until you understand. Others will only say it once for you. If they give up, it can be helpful to say to your child that they have been telling you a lot. This shows that you know they have been trying to communicate. It can be helpful to then find something else to play with or talk about.

- Set up a book with the playgroup/school. Write down words or events which your child might talk about but which may be difficult to understand out of context e.g. names of family members or pets, favourite characters from television programmes, being upset about leaving their teddy at Centre Parks by mistake. The staff can also write down events that have happened to help you 'tune in' to what your child might tell you at the end of the day.

If you have any queries or concerns about a child's speech sound development, please read the information sheets 'General Information' and 'When Children Learn Sounds' for further information and guidance. If you continue to have concerns, do not hesitate to contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service to discuss this further.

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