

Speech and Language Therapy Service for Children, Barking and Dagenham
Mainstream Schools Team 2016

Supporting Your Child's Speech Sound Development

Your child is having difficulty with some speech sounds. That may be because:

- Your child has particular sounds that are hard to pronounce. In that case they have problems with articulation.
- Your child can say the sounds, but doesn't use them in all the expected places. In that case they have problems with phonology.
- Both of the above difficulties are present.

A speech sound disorder occurs when mistakes continue past a certain age. Every sound has a different range of ages within which children should begin saying the sound correctly. Speech sound disorders include problems with articulation (making sounds) and phonological processes (sound patterns).

Your child's Speech and Language Therapist will explain the particular difficulties that your child has, and which sounds or groups of sounds are being targeted in therapy. Use the strategies below for the sound(s) that your therapist has asked you to work on.

Stages for learning speech sounds

Your child will need to go through lots of stages before they can use their new sound(s) all the time in ordinary conversations. First, saying the sound on its own; then in a syllable; then a word. Once your child can say words with the new sound(s) in they will then move on to short phrases, longer phrases, saying several of the target words in a sentence and putting several sentences together. Some children move through the stages very quickly, others need specific teaching at each stage.

You can use the strategies below with your child at every stage. Your therapist will let you know what stage your child has reached.

Strategies to use with your child

As adult speakers we constantly make little mistakes when we talk, and then quickly correct them, almost without noticing. This process of self-monitoring and self-correcting is called making revisions and repairs. Children with phonological disorders are usually not very good "self-correctors", partly because it is hard for them to self-monitor their speech. The following strategies and activities can be used in order to encourage the development of self-monitoring and the ability to make revisions and repairs.

Talk about making mistakes and "fixing them"

For example: You might say to your child, "If I said 'yam' when I should have said 'lamb', I would have to fix it up. So if I said, 'Mary had a little yam', I would have to fix it up and say, 'Mary had a little lamb'"

Model self-corrections

For example: You might say to your child, "It is too wet to mow the yawn...uh oh...I mean 'lawn'. That was a fixed-up-one. First I said 'yawn' and then I quickly fixed it up and said 'lawn'. Too wet to mow the lawn".

Reinforce self-corrections

Do this by drawing attention to them and commenting when they are made spontaneously (i.e., without adult prompting). For example: You could say to your child, "That was a good fixed-up-one. First you said 'tar', and then you fixed it up all by yourself and said 'car'. The best thing was that you reminded yourself!"

Use labelled praise

When you use labelled praise, be very precise about what you are praising. For example: Making a very specific comment such as, "I like the way you said 'shoe' with a good 'sh' in it" will be a more powerful reinforcer than a general comment such as, "You said that nicely". Labelled praise can be used for reinforcing clear speech attempts, and to encourage children to make spontaneous revisions and repairs. Labelled praise can be used also when your child makes an improved attempt at pronouncing a word: For example:

Adult: What colour is that?

Child: Bat.

Adult: Mmm?

Child: Berlat.

Adult: That sounded more like black. I like the way you fixed it up.

Explain why the 'fixed-up-ones' are important

For example: You could say to your child, "When you do a fixed-up-one all by yourself it means that you are learning to remind yourself to make your words sound right just like I have to when I make a mistake myself".

Model correct pronunciations in conversation

Modelling is simply giving a clear example with no additional instructions, explanations or demands. When you notice a deviation from the normal pattern (e.g., using the wrong sound or omitting a sound) involving a sound pattern being worked on in therapy, repeat the word correctly yourself, once, twice or three times in the context of the conversation. E.g.:

Child: That's a tunny one.

Adult: Yes, a very funny one. A funny, funny one.

When making modelling corrections, remember:

1. Not to distort the sound or word by over-emphasising it. It is better to draw the sound or word to the child's attention by saying it repeatedly.
2. Not to ask the child to repeat the word back to you correctly. All you have to do is say the word clearly yourself several times, in a way the child will notice (e.g., as part of a conversation that you are both enjoying).

Reference: Caroline Bowen www.speech-language-therapy.com

Further ideas and support

- www.afasic.org.uk
- www.ican.org.uk
- www.speechdisorder.co.uk

Please do not hesitate to contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service if you require further information or resources, or if you have any questions, on **0300 300 1754** or salt.admin@nhs.net