

Top Tips for Working with a Child's Speech Sounds

There are lots of different ways to help your child with their speech sounds in between their speech therapy sessions. Here are some of our top tips:

- Set aside time to do speech practice in a quiet room with few distractions.
- A short session of 10 minutes every day is better than a long session once a week.
- Lots of demonstration and good modelling of the sound or words from you is very helpful. Always give the child lots of encouragement when they have tried hard and praise when they have succeeded in an activity e.g. 'I heard you use your 't' sound then, that's great'. This is more powerful than correcting.
- When working on a child's speech be careful about which sounds you comment on. If they are working on 'k', do not give feedback on any other sounds they might find difficult. Ignore other sounds unless being specifically targeted and focus on 'k'.
- Make sure your practice is fun and rewarding. Take a look at recommended [games](#) for speech practice on our 'speech' page on our website www.coventrychildrenssl.co.uk
- Please carry out the activities you have been given but feel free to come up with your own too!
- If you find it difficult to get your child to practice, you could try using a reward chart to help them to stay motivated
- Think about how you could incorporate the practice into every day life e.g. people's names or parts of your routine. A child who is working on 'g' could practice with you saying 'ready steady go' every time you are at traffic lights.



Please see our next page for ideas on producing specific sounds. Please note that these tips can vary in success depending on your child and their speech patterns. All children are different. Your child's speech and language therapist will be able to give you strategies specific to your child.

Top tips for producing speech sounds

m

- Remind your child to keep their lips together. Use a mirror for visual feedback.
- Encourage child to put their hand on the adult's mouth to feel the vibrations
- Model during meal times e.g. 'mmmm' to indicate the food is tasty

p

- Remind your child to keep their lips together. Use a mirror for visual feedback.
- Practice blowing objects e.g. feathers or pom poms
- Practice smacking lips together to encourage the 'popping' sound
- Practice keeping lips together and puffing out cheeks to let the air build up. You can use a balloon as a visual cue (blowing it up and letting out the air)
- Model the 'p' sound when blowing bubbles or balloons e.g. 'pop pop pop'



b

- Remind your child to keep their lips together. Use a mirror for visual feedback.
- If your child can produce a 'p', then you can practice saying 'p' and then saying it loudly for 'b'.
- Encourage your child to feel your voice box for the vibration of the voice 'turning on'.
- If your child can make a 'm' sound, then you can practice making 'm' and then holding their nose, the air will be released through the mouth making 'b'. You can then gradually reduce the nose holding.
- Model the sound in hide and seek games e.g. 'boo' and in pretend play e.g. 'baby bear'.

t

- If your child will allow, it can be helpful to touch the top of their mouth to show the child where the tongue needs to tap. This is roof of the mouth just behind their front teeth.
- Try putting some spread e.g. jam/peanut butter on the top of their mouth and encourage your child to lick it off, reminding them that is where the tongue goes for the 't' sound.
- It may be easier for a child to say this sound after a vowel such as 'eat'. Stretch out the 'ee' sound and see if they can add a 't' to the end.
- Model this 'tutting' sound (e.g. the sound you make if someone is told off). This is produced in the same place as the 't' sound.
- If your child can already make the 's' sound, practice 't' in words such as 'stay' and 'star', asking the child to push the 't' sound after the 's'.



d

- Use the ideas above for 't'. Encourage your child to say the sound loudly.
- Encourage your child to feel your voice box for the vibration of the voice 'turning on'.

n

- If your child will allow, it can be helpful to touch the top of their mouth to show the child where the tongue needs to tap. This is roof of the mouth just behind their front teeth.
- Tell your child that air needs to come down their nose to make 'n' (just like the 'm' sound).
- Use a cold mirror under the nose. Practice trying to make the mirror mist by making the air come down the nose. Adults can model this.
- Model in the word 'no'. Practice this if your child is saying 'no' correctly and give feedback that they are using the 'n' sound

S

- Practice this sound whilst smiling and use a mirror to help keep the 'smile' posture
- You could try asking your child to place their tongue between their teeth (as in the 'th' sound) as they make the sound to help them with where their tongue should be. Over time we can gradually work on moving the tongue slightly further back.
- Using an 'ee' vowel can help with tongue placement. Practice e.g. 'ees' to see if this helps
- Try making a 't' sound and then stretch it out to become more like the 's' sound.
- Depending on your child's error sound, you may find our handout [palatal lateral 's'](#) useful which can be found under our 'speech' section.
- Model the sound as a 'snake sound' 'sssss' and ask the child to listen and watch how the adult makes this sound.

Z

- Use the ideas above for 's'
- Encourage your child to say the sound loudly
- Encourage your child to feel your voice box for the vibration of the voice 'turning on'.
- Model the sound as a 'buzzy bee' sound 'zzzz' and ask the child to listen and watch how the adult makes this sound.

f

- Prompt child to place teeth on bottom lip and blow. Try smile, bite, blow.
- Use a finger to put the lip behind the teeth if needed
- Using a mirror is very helpful for visual feedback and encourage the child to watch you.
- Give a cue of 'bunny teeth' to remind child of how to place their teeth on their lip.
- Practice biting the bottom lip gently then sucking and blowing while keeping the teeth on the lip.



V

- Use the ideas above for 'f'
- Encourage your child to say the sound loudly
- Encourage your child to feel your voice box for the vibration of the voice 'turning on' and see if they notice their lip feeling tickly.

sh

- Use a mirror to remind your child to make their lips round. Use a mirror as a visual cue.
- Remind your child to use a short 'sh' sound as a quick burst sound.
- Try making a long 's' sound and encourage your child to move their tongue back.
- The 'oo' sound can help to facilitate this sound. Try 'oosh' and 'ooshoo'.
- If your child can make the 'ch' sound already, see if they can make a really stretched out 'ch' sound as this turns into 'sh'.
- Model the sound as a sleeping sound 'shhh'. Use the finger in front of the lips as a visual cue.



h

- Practice a laughing sound, panting dog sound, big sigh or exaggerated yawn
- Remind child to keep mouth open wide
- Vowels such as 'a' (in hat) and 'o' (in hot) can help facilitate this sound. Try one of these sounds e.g. 'a' and then do a whisper sound 'h' at the start 'ha'.

W

- Remind your child this sound needs round lips and use a mirror for feedback. If they struggle with keeping lips round, practice the 'oo' sound first.
- Try putting lips around a straw and looking at the shape the lips make around the straw.
- Model the sound 'woo' through sounds such as windy sound, police siren or owl sound.

k

- Remind your child that the 'k' sound is made with the back of our tongue
- Encourage your child to open their mouth wide (like a crocodile) and keep their mouth open as they make the sound. Adults might try touching the child's chin to remind them to keep their mouth open or ask the child to keep their hand on their chin so it doesn't move and their mouth stays open. Now try making the sound again.
- Try the sound after an 'ah' sound (e.g. 'ahh..k')
- Try using a finger to gently hold the child's tongue tip down (and prevent the 't' sound). This will encourage the back of the tongue to move.
- Some children struggle to make any sounds with the back of their tongue or back of their mouths. Practice coughing sounds and 'monster' sounds (think Darth Vader!) and remind the child that the back of their mouth is doing the work for these sounds.
- Some children have particular words they can say e.g. 'car' or 'key'. Try working on the sound through that word e.g. 'car - k-k-k car'



g

- Use the ideas above for 'k'
- Encourage your child to say the sound loudly
- Encourage your child to feel your voice box for the vibration of the voice 'turning on'
- Model the sound as a 'gurgling' sound e.g. the sound of water going down the drain

L

- If your child will allow, it can be helpful to touch the top of their mouth to show the child where the tongue needs to tap. This is roof of the mouth just behind their front teeth.
- Try putting some spread e.g. jam/peanut butter on the top of their mouth and encourage your child to lick it off, reminding them that is where the tongue goes for the 'l' sound.
- Use a mirror to show your child how the tongue starts at the top of their mouth and drops down to make a 'l'
- It can be helpful to practice in the middle of words e.g. 'hello'
- Try making a 't' sound and then let the air out down the sides of the tongue



r

- Practice this sound in a mirror and remind your child they must keep their voice turned 'on' for this sound
- If your child produces as a 'w', remind them that 'w' is produced with lips, 'r' is produced with the tongue.
- Prompt to keep lips spread and not rounded
- Try the sound between vowels e.g. 'ah- r- ah'
- It can help to practice through the 'tr' and/or 'kr'

y

- Practice in words such as 'ear', 'eye' and 'Eeyore' to elicit this sound
- Model within words such as 'yes', 'you' and 'your'

ch

- Practice making a 't' sound followed by a 'sh' sound
- You can also practice sequences of 't' and 'y' sounds together
- Practice sneeze noises e.g. 'achoo'
- Model the train sound 'ch-ch-ch-ch choo choo'



j

- Practice as above for the 'ch' sound
- Practice turning on our voices from the 'ch' sound and making it louder
- Practice repeat sequences of 'd' and 'y' sounds together
- Model this sound within people's names. This is a common sound in names e.g. Jace, Jenny, Jeremiah.