

Supporting your child's speech sound development

Sometimes children use the wrong sound, miss out a sound or mix up sounds in words. This can make it hard for us to understand what they are saying. If your child makes speech sound errors...

✓ DO:

- **Praise** the child's efforts (e.g. "yes, great try!") to make them feel confident.
- **Model** a good example back to the child (e.g. "it's a fish, I can hear a long 'f' sound at the start of fish") so the child hears good examples. Children need to hear sounds lots of times before they can copy and make sounds.
- **Ask the child to show you** what they're talking about if you can't understand them (e.g. "can you take me to it?", "can you point to it?").

✗ DO NOT:

- **Correct the child** (e.g. "no, it's not tat, it's cat!"). This can lower the child's confidence and cause frustration.
- **Ask the child to repeat you** (e.g. "copy me, say cat"). Children will find it hard to copy sounds they have not learnt to make yet.
- **Ignore the child** or become frustrated when you can't understand them.

Building blocks of communication development

Speech sounds are the sounds we make that blend together to make words. Speech sounds develop in order. There are a number of mistakes that we expect children to make until a certain age. Typically developing children may not learn to use the right sounds in all words until around age 8. This is why we usually work on **speech last**.



6 to 7
years

Birth to 2.5
years

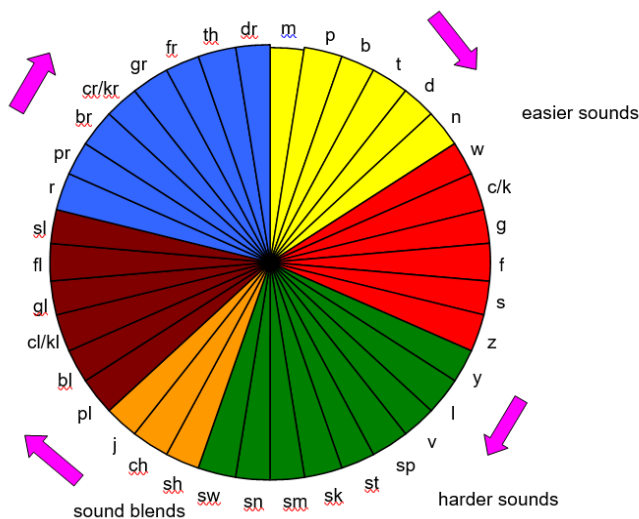
The development of speech sounds

5 to 6
years

2.5 to 3
years

4 to 5
years

3 to 4
years



Ideas to try at home

Syllable Clapping

Take turns to pick an object and name it. Clap the number of syllables (parts) together, exaggerating each part of the word (e.g. 'teddy' = 2 claps, 'banana' = 3 claps).



Listening Walk

Go on a 'listening walk'. Stop and listen for things you can hear (e.g. car beeping, birds tweeting, dog barking). How many things can you hear?



Make a Sound Scrapbook

Collect lots of pictures starting with different speech sounds. Stick them into a scrapbook. Use the pictures model speech sounds to your child by pointing to and naming the items.



Rhyming activities

Sing nursery rhymes or use rhyming books (e.g. 'Foxes Socks', 'Hide & Seek Pig'). Let your child join in and fill the gaps (e.g. let them make the animal sounds in 'Old Macdonald').

