



Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

Top 10 Tips to Help a Child Whose Speech is Unclear

There are many helpful activities parents and settings can do with children that will benefit their listening and speaking - Here are our top 10

1. **Accept the way your child has said a word but also model the correct way of saying it:** e.g. If your child says "Tore pinger." You could say, "Yes, your sore finger." Your child may not be ready to say a new sound in conversation even though they might be able to repeat it after you. They are not being lazy and it can be discouraging to be told they are saying something incorrectly and asked to repeat a word they can't yet say. Listen to what they say, not how they say it.
2. **Encourage your child to use other strategies to show you what they mean:** Try asking questions to clarify or encourage them to use actions, pictures or show you instead to get their message across. Give people who care for your child a list of their words for familiar people and pets e.g. Gangan – Grandad.
3. **If your child is frustrated and you haven't understood all of what your child said:** Try repeating back what you have understood as this should help to build their confidence.
4. **Encourage activities that will help your child's listening, attention and concentration:** These are important underlying skills for speaking clearly as they encourage a child to tune in to other people, to wait and take turns. If they do need speech and language therapy then listening, taking turns and following instructions will be important skills for your child to have developed.

5. **Enjoy rhymes and songs together and help them to see the patterns and rhythms in music and speech:** this will really help with building listening skills and awareness of speech sounds.
6. **Look at your child and get down to their level:** This helps your child see how you say things, it shows your child you are listening and that you value what they are saying.
7. **Give your child time to respond:** So they can plan what they want to say without feeling rushed.
8. **If your child has a dummy:** Don't allow them to speak with it in their mouth - keep it for nap times and reduce their reliance on it as quickly as possible.
9. **Check your child's hearing:** If you have concerns refer them for a hearing test.
10. **Focus on the positive – make it fun:** Improvement in your child's speech is likely to take some time so it is important that they don't lose motivation and confidence to speak, from others expecting too much of them too soon. If your child is anxious about their speech, reassure your child to avoid loss of self-esteem - Explain that we all find talking tricky at times and it will get easier. Incorporate speaking and listening into everyday play so that it doesn't seem like 'work' for you or your child. Be confident in your own skills as a parent, knowing that with a bit of help you can really make a difference to your child's speech!

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about your child's talking you can either:

- Look on our website for the 'Quick Reference Guide'. This will guide you when the best time to refer your child to Speech and Language Therapy. The referral forms and further advice sheets are also available on the website:

<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/childrens-therapy-referral/>

- You can access further information from the following websites:

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk>

Go to 'Resources - Resources for Parents' and look for the 'Through the eyes of a child' videos.

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk>

<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk>

<https://www.jollylearning.co.uk/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>

For settings refer to our training sessions

/downhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq2Y-
oMb4pEhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIBc703kYMg