



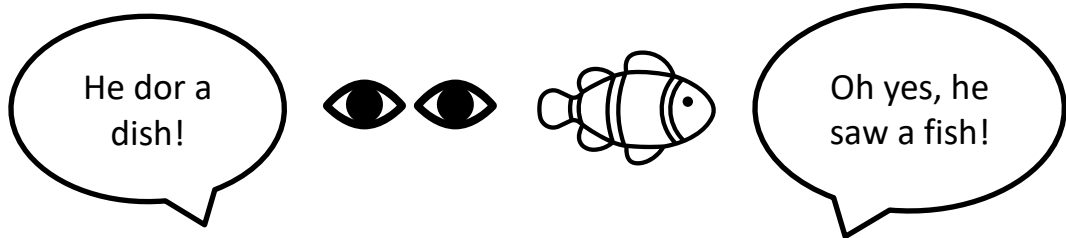
Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

How to Support Children with Speech Sound Development

Keep background noise to a minimum when you are talking to the child, to ensure they can hear and focus on the sounds that you are making.

Sit directly opposite the child so they can see what you are doing with your mouth to produce different sounds.

Repeat back words that contain sounds that your child finds difficult, without 'correcting' them or asking them to repeat. For example:

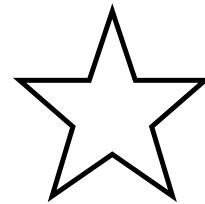
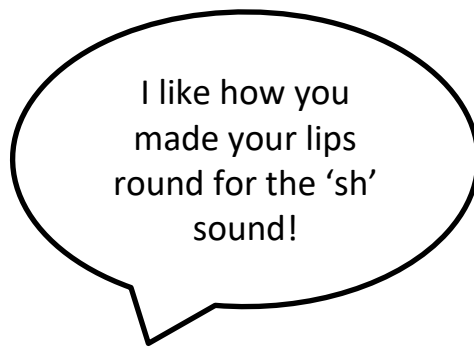
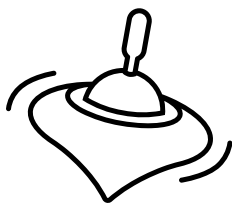


Listen to what the child is saying, rather than focusing on how they are saying it. Children with speech sound difficulties often know they find some sounds difficult to make, and it can be frustrating.

Make sure younger children take their dummy out when they are awake. A dummy used when a child is awake can discourage them from talking during play, which can limit their opportunities for developing speech. Some children try to talk with their dummy in their mouth - this can result in a child producing all sounds at the back of their mouth which can make them difficult to understand.

Well-developed sound awareness skills (phonological awareness) **are essential** to speech sound development. There is good evidence in the research that children's speech sound production skills often improve just through work on their phonological awareness skills, without needing to work on the child's production of specific sounds. For younger children, **songs and rhymes** are a great way of encouraging the child to 'tune in' to speech. Some great ideas for phonological awareness activities can be found on the BBC Tiny Happy People website (see below for link).

Make sure that **practice sessions are fun and motivating** - use games, give lots of praise and use a reward chart to motivate the child.



If you haven't understood the child:

Try not to pretend you have understood - children usually realise when you haven't understood, and this can be disheartening.

Instead, you can try:

- Asking the child to **show you**/tell you more/draw it Can you say that last bit again?'
- **Asking questions** to prompt the child to give you more context
e.g. who was there?
was this at home or at school?
what happened after that?
Asking closed questions can also help for children who are very difficult to understand e.g. 'do you want to play building blocks, or in the garden?'
- **A home school diary** may also help to provide context about what the child has done/where they have been, and can support with knowing the names of important people or pets.

If you have tried using these strategies and you still have concerns about the impact that your child's speech sound difficulties are having, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice:

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

- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details
- You can also access further information from the following websites:

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

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/>