



"SOUND EFFECTS"

INVESTIGATING SPEECH IMPAIRMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Information for Parents

By the time children are 4 years old:

- 90-100% of their speech should be clear to strangers
- Most of their speech sounds will be produced correctly



But some sounds are later to develop. For instance, some preschool-age children may still use "w" in place of "r" (e.g., "rabbit" → "wabbit") or "f" in place of "th" (e.g., "thumb" → "fumb").



If your child is 4 years old or over and has difficulty with sounds or has speech that is difficult to understand, you might like to consider seeing a speech pathologist.

Speech pathologists are trained to assess and provide therapy for children with communication disorders (including speech). Often they ask parents / guardians to continue the therapy at home to increase the child's opportunities to practice, and improve their sound production.

There are a number of ways in which you can help your child's speech development. Some are listed over the page. However, it is recommended that you consult a speech pathologist for a therapy program tailored to your child and his/her specific needs.

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STIMULATING SOUNDS

- Model correct production – try not to use “baby-talk” (e.g. “wabbit”).
- Slow down your speech rate and emphasise sounds that your child finds difficult
- When your child produces a word incorrectly, repeat the word the way it’s supposed to sound. It’s not necessary for your child to always “try again.” Hearing you provide a model is another way to help them learn and will not discourage them from talking.
- Talk about the characteristics of sounds to help your child think about how sounds *sound* (e.g., “sh” is a quiet sound).
- Associate sounds with movements that the mouth makes so your child becomes familiar with the way sounds *feel* (e.g., “p” is a “popping sound”).
- With your child, look in the mirror and practice saying sounds. The mirror provides a way for children to watch how their mouth moves when they say particular sounds. This helps them realise what sounds *look like*.
- Talk about difficult sounds when they occur in words (e.g., “There’s a **g**irl. Ooh I heard that ‘g’ sound. Listen, **g**irl. Can you hear that?”)
- Talk about other words that have the same “special” sound (think of people, favourite foods, toys etc).
- Cut out pictures in magazines that have the special sound.
- Play “I spy” and look for objects that have the special sound.
- Read through books and begin associating sounds with letters.
- Have fun “playing with sounds” together

