

Speech Sound Development

What sounds to expect and when to expect them

Speech sound difficulties can have an impact on a child's ability to make them understood to their communication partners.

Speech sound difficulties can have an impact on a child's ability to develop their reading and writing skills.

Types of Speech Sound Difficulty

- Difficulties producing a specific sound or sounds in words
- Difficulties co-ordinating the movements of their lips and tongue to organise the sounds and make words.

Talking with a dummy in the mouth can make it difficult for a child to co-ordinate the movements for speech and for them to get their lips and tongue in the right place to make speech sounds. If they have a dummy try to stop daytime use and this will give your child the best chance at being able to communicate clearly to others.

What speech sounds should I expect and when?

Some speech sound develop later than others; this means it is typical for young children not to be able to say some sounds.

Generally, children can say these sounds by the following ages:

Sounds often develop in the same order, even if they develop later than the information below shows.

Sound	50% of children	90% of children
Common vowels	1 and half to 2 years	3 years
p b m n t d w	1 and half to 2 years	3 years
k g f h y	1 and half to 3 years	4 years
ng s	1 and half to 3 years	5 years
l	3 to 3 and half years	6 years
sh ch j z v	3 and half to 4 and half years	6 years
r	4 and half to 5 years	7 years
Clusters (such as cl fl br tr sm st sk)	5 years	7 years

Clusters (such as str skr spl)	5 years plus	7 years plus
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It is also common for children to mispronounce some words while they are learning. Some things you might hear include:

Missing off the ends of words, for example, “dog” is said as “do”	Usually heard until 2 and half years
Making sounds made at the back of the mouth (k or g) at the front. For example, “cat” is said as “tat”, “go” as “do”	Usually heard until 3 years
Saying long sounds such as ‘s’ as shorter sounds such as ‘t’, for example, “sun” is said as “tun”	Can be heard until 4 years
When two sounds are said together (eg: sp), missing one out, for example, “star” is said as “tar”	Can be heard until 4½ years
Putting the sounds in the wrong order e.g. “caterpillar” is said as “paterkiller”	Can be heard until 5 years
Pronouncing ‘s’ as a ‘th’ (also known as a lisp)	Can be heard until 5 years

The following information can be found in the downloads below

- General Strategies to support Speech Sound Development
- Getting Ready for Speech Sound Work – Early Listening Skills
- Playing with Sounds
- Sound Discrimination
- Comparing Consonants
- Generalising Speech Sounds