

# Before Consulting a Speech/Language Pathologist about Speech Sound Errors



## Speech Errors are Typical as Children Develop Speech

Speech errors are very typical in children 3 to 5 years of age. Most 4 year olds produce some speech errors. A child who produces one or two sounds incorrectly could be considered 'typically developing'. However, a 4 year old who produces many speech errors may require intervention. As a general rule, children use understandable (although not perfectly correct) speech by age 4.

## What Is the Normal Mastery of Speech Sounds?

The ages when 90% of children have mastered each sound:

- 2-3 year olds can produce these sounds correctly: p, b, m, h, w, d, n
- 3-4 year olds can produce these sounds correctly: y, k, g, t, f
- 4-5 year olds can produce these sounds correctly: l, v, s, z, sh, ch, j
- 5-6 year olds can produce these sounds correctly: r, th (voiced)
- 6-7 year olds can produce these sounds correctly: th (voiceless)

## What You Can Do to Foster Speech Sound Development in Children

While most children learn to make all of the sounds of our language on their own, some children do not. We can't always predict which children will learn speech sounds on their own and which ones will need a little help. It is important for adults to learn how to foster speech sound development while remembering to respond to 'what the child says' before responding to 'how the child says it'.

- With younger children, bring whatever you are talking about closer to your mouth so the child is more apt to focus on speech production.
- Functional practice guides children to the real reason to change their speech pattern - to get across their spoken message in an understandable way.

## Before Consulting a Speech/Language Pathologist—Gather Information

When a child's sounds are noticeably different from children of the same age:

- Talk with the parents/teacher about your concerns to see if they are noticing the same speech patterns.
- Think about and document the sounds the child is not producing correctly. Are these sounds mastered by 90% of children that age (see Mastery of Speech Sounds above)?
- Observe whether or not the child is using a particular sound correctly in some words. Inconsistency may show that the child is beginning to develop the correct use of the sound.
- Try some of the speech facilitation techniques listed below. Is the child able to produce the sound correctly with a little help?

Facilitation Technique	Child's Remark	Caregiver Response
<b>Model</b>	"Waiting for the buth."	"Waiting for the <u>bussss</u> ."
<b>Feedback</b>	"Waiting for the buth."	"I heard the /th/sound when you said busss."
<b>Cue</b>	"Waiting for the buth."	"Watch me, bussss."
<b>Correction</b>	"Waiting for the buth."	"Say bussss."
<b>Communication Breakdown</b>	"Waiting for the buth."	"Buth?"

\*\*\*If the child can make the sound with a little help, an immediate Child Development Check-in might not be necessary.

# Before Consulting a Speech/Language Pathologist about Language & Stuttering



## **BUILDING LANGUAGE – What You Can Do!**

Children learn language skills by interacting with their environment. Some children will enter a classroom with limited language skills because they have not yet been exposed to a language rich environment. **If the child's language skills improve, provided a language rich classroom, a Child Development Check-In might not be necessary.**

## **LANGUAGE FACILITATION STRATEGIES**

### ♦ **DAILY CONVERSATIONS**

Talk about people, activities and objects that are not here, not now. Point out new words, talk face to face, and provide wait time for the child to respond. You might need to encourage the child to take a speaking turn. Conversation deepens over multiple turns. Try to engage the child for at least 5 speaking turns.

### ♦ **SELF-TALK**

Self-talk is talking about what you are doing while you are doing it. For example, during mealtime you might say, "I need some plates. Today we have blue plates. Let's set out the plates. One-two-three-four."

### ♦ **PARALLEL TALK**

Talk about what the child is doing, seeing, hearing, or feeling as he goes through his day. For example, When the child is playing with play-doh say, "You have some red play-dough. It feels squishy. You are making a long snake: roll, roll, roll."

### ♦ **EXPAND**

Repeat what the child says and add just a little more information, such as a descriptive word (color, shape or size), a word ending (-ing or -s), or a new vocabulary word.

- The child says, "That doggie" and you say, "That is a big doggie."
- The child says, "Popsicle cold" and you say, "The popsicle is frozen."

## **PRESCHOOL STUTTERING**

If a child has difficulty speaking and tends to hesitate on or repeat certain syllables, words, or phrases, they might be going through a period of "typical stuttering" that children, between the ages of 18 months and 5 years, experience as they learn to speak. Research indicates that nearly 80% of all young children who have difficulty with fluency (or who "stutter") will recover on their own within 12-24 months without the need for speech therapy.

## **Before Consulting a Speech/Language Pathologist—Gather Information**

- ♦ Does the family have a history of stuttering?
- ♦ Has the child been stuttering for more than 12 months, on a pretty consistent basis?
- ♦ Does the child ever get completely stuck with no sound at all coming out of their mouth?
- ♦ Does the child ever show physical signs of tension? For example, do they shut their eyes, or look away, or does their face look tight when they stutter?
- ♦ Does the child have difficulty with any other aspect of speech and language?

\*\*\*\*If the answer to any of questions above is "yes" you may want to talk with the family about completing a Child Development Check-In.

## **Ways to Help Children Speak More Easily**

- ♦ Use "**Easy Speech**", which is speaking at a slowed rate and pause at natural places in your sentences. This will encourage your students to use a similar rate in their speech.
- ♦ **Reduce Communication Time Pressures** by limiting direct questions and instead use comments or indirect requests like "I wonder..." "maybe..." or "I think...". Also, create situations where each student gets to talk without the pressure of being interrupted.
- ♦ **Repeat and Rephrase** Provide a good model of what the child has said to let them know you are focused on their message, not their stutters.