

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
Model	"Waiting for the buth."	"Waiting for the <u>bussss</u> ."
Feedback	"Waiting for the buth."	"I heard the /th/sound when you said busss."
Cue	"Waiting for the buth."	"Watch me, bussss."
Correction	"Waiting for the buth."	"Say bussss."
Communication Breakdown	"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.