

# Supporting School Age Children with Speech Sound Difficulties

An online workshop for teaching assistants

Presented by Children & Family Health Devon  
Speech & Language Therapy Team

# Contents

Please click on the section you wish to view.

- [Speech sound difficulties- an overview.](#)
- [How speech sounds are made.](#)
- [Speech sound difficulties.](#)
- [General strategies to help children with unclear speech.](#)
- [How to work on a speech programme.](#)
- [Useful websites.](#)

# Speech sound difficulties- an overview

# Communication difficulties – some stats

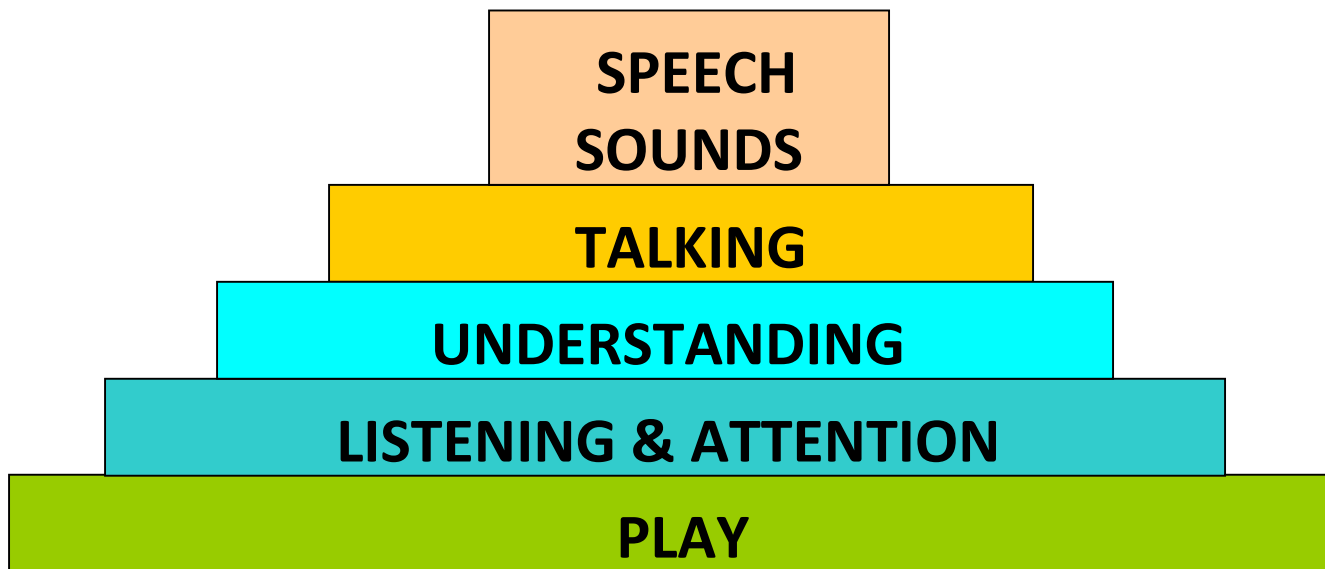
(taken from: [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk))

- In the UK, over 1 million children and young people – that's 2 – 3 in every UK classroom – have some form of long term and persistent speech, language and communication difficulty. *This can affect them early, severely and for life.*
- In areas of poverty, over 50% of children are starting school with delayed communication skills. Their speech may be unclear, vocabulary is smaller, sentences are shorter and they are able to understand only simple instructions. *Many of these children can catch up with the right support.*
- A YouGov poll, undertaken by The Communication Trust, of 349 teachers found that only 27% had received training around speech, language and communication and 81% felt they would benefit from more training on this issue.



Private and confidential

# The Communication Pyramid



The Communication Pyramid shows the importance of certain skills to underpin speech and language development



Private and confidential

# Impact of speech sound difficulties

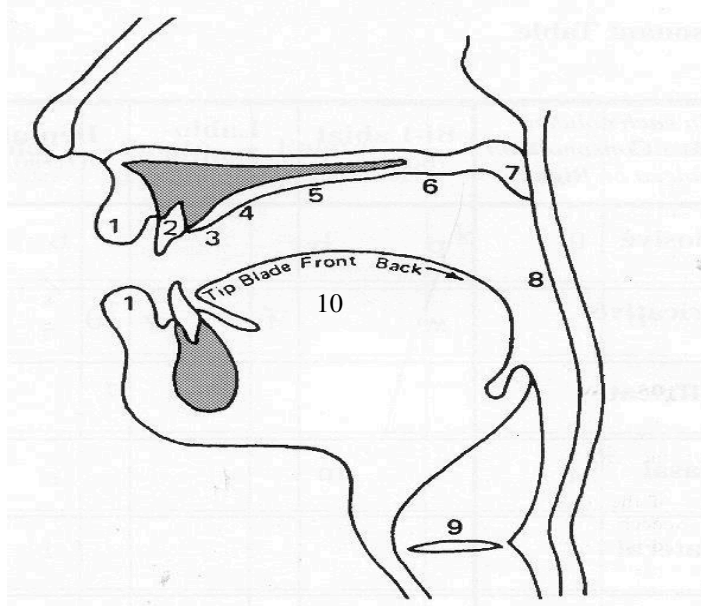
- Communication
- Ability to get their needs met
- Ability to share information
- Social interaction
- Family relationships
- Peer relationships
- Emotions
- Behaviour
- Confidence / Self esteem
- Educational progress



# How speech sounds are made.



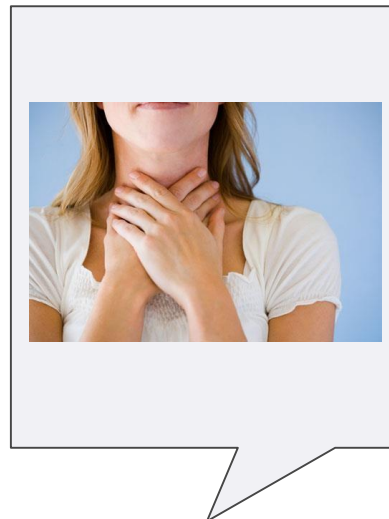
# Speech sound production



1. Lips
2. Teeth
3. Alveolar ridge
4. and 5. Hard palate
6. Soft palate
7. Uvula
8. Pharynx
9. Voice box
10. Tongue



# Where is the sound made - Front or Back?



**Front Sounds:** m n p b t d s z f v th sh ch j l r w

**Back Sounds:** c g ng



# Where is the sound made - Mouth or Nose?

**Nasal Sounds (nose)** : m n ng

**Oral Sounds (mouth)**: the rest



What type of sound is it - Long or Short?

))).....



Sh.....

)))



Buh!

**Long Sounds:** m n s z sh f v th l w

**Short Sounds:** p b t d c g ch j

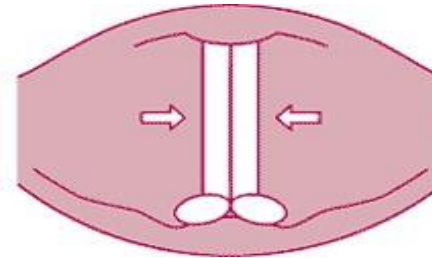


# Is the sound Voiceless (quiet) or Voiced (noisy)?



QUIET

NOISY



Vocal folds  
vibrate for  
quiet sounds

Vocal folds stay open for  
noisy sounds

**Quiet Sounds:** p t c s f sh th

**Noisy Sounds:** b d g v



# Typical Age of Consonant Production



Average age children learn to pronounce English consonants correctly  
(Based on a compilation of 15 English speech acquisition studies by McLeod and Crowe, 2018)



# Speech sound difficulties



## Factors Impacting on Speech Sound Development

**Hearing Difficulties** (e.g. glue ear/ sensorineural)

**Neurological disorders** (e.g. cerebral palsy, dyspraxia)

**Structural abnormality** (e.g. cleft lip / palate; impaired palate movement/tongue tie)

**Genetics** (eg. Down's Syndrome/family history)

**Environment** (eg. lack of stimulation, dummy)

**Unknown or no cause**



**Speech difficulties are NOT due to laziness!**

## Types of Speech Sound Difficulties

**Articulation** – difficulty moving or coordinating the tongue, lips, jaw to make speech sounds. (eg. child can't coordinate teeth & lips to say 'f' sound/ child has a lisp.)

**Phonology** - difficulty organising speech sounds into a system of sound contrasts (ie. sounds are stored incorrectly – eg. child can say ‘s’ but always uses ‘d’ in words)





**Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia** - difficulty coordinating the muscle movements necessary to sequence sounds into syllables and words.

**Dysarthria** – a speech disorder resulting from neurological injury featuring weak or imprecise speech sounds.(eg. often seen in children with cerebral palsy)







# Typical error patterns

(Dodd, 2002; Bowen 1998; Grunwell 1987)

Typical error pattern	Description	Example	Usually resolved by
Final consonant deletion	Missing off the last sound of a word	fi 	3;0
Voicing	Saying quiet sounds (e.g. p, t, k) as noisy sounds (e.g. b, d, g)	ben 	3;0
Stopping	Saying long sounds (e.g. f, v, s, z, sh, th) as short sounds (e.g. p, b, t, d)	dun 	'f' - 3;0 's v z' – 3;06 'sh' - 4;06 'th' – 5;0
Fronting	Saying back sounds (e.g. k, g) as front sounds (e.g. t, d)	tar 	4;0



# Typical error patterns

Typical error pattern	Description	Example	Usually resolved by
Deaffrication	Changing 'ch' to 't' and 'j' to 'd'.	<div>teese </div> <div>dam </div>	5;0
Consonant blend reduction	Deleting a consonant when there are two consonants together	<div>fower </div>	5;0
Gliding	For example, r ⑦ w, l ⑦ y	<div>wed </div>	6;0



# General strategies to help children with unclear speech

# How can I help?



## Build the child's confidence with speaking

- Respond to what the child has said, rather than how clearly they speak
  - Repeat what the child has said, but model the correct pronunciation:  
e.g. If the child says: “I li de bis tory”  
Adult might say: “yes, I like the fish story too”
- Don't ask the child to repeat the words they have mispronounced (unless you are at the generalisation stage of therapy for a particular sound)
- Praise the child for the other things that they do well
- Avoid talking to other people about the child's speech in front of the child
- Communicate with the child face to face



# What if I can't understand what the child has said?



- If part of the child's conversation is understood repeat that part back. This lets the child know that they have been partially understood and may encourage them to tell you more.
- Don't pretend to understand –  
Ask further questions e.g. Is it at home or at school. Ask the child to show you.  
Encourage the use of gesture and mime.
- Use strategies to anticipate what the child may want to say/ try to ensure that you know the context.  
e.g. Use Home-School book or diary / Discussions with parents / Get to know family names / pet names  
/ Avoid asking open ended questions and that have no context (e.g. What did you do in the holidays)



# How To Work on a Speech Programme



# The Speech Sound Wall



# What Will I Need?


A quiet place to work away from the classroom.

Appropriate table and chairs – try to sit opposite the child.

Speech programme and note book- note down briefly what you have done each session.

Picture resources – you will need time to print out, laminate, cut out etc.

Fun games – skittles, snakes & ladders, Pop Up Pirate, Mr Potato Head etc.

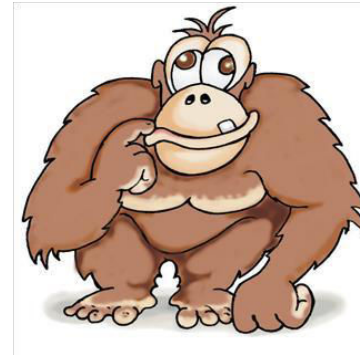
Stickers or other rewards – eg stamps, house points, play with favourite activity. 



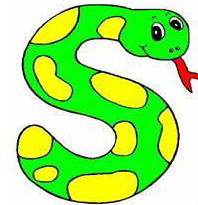
# Speech Resources

## Sound Pictures

Speechlink



**g**



Jollyphonics  
More Sound Pictures



Caroline Bowen



Cued Articulation



## Pictures & Objects For Speech Games

1. Sound cards to play games listening out for single sounds.(eg. Speechlink/Jollyphonics)
2. A selection of objects starting with the target sound and the errored sound (eg. s & d) to do initial sound sorting listening games.(eg.feely bag activity)
3. Minimal pairs pictures to do listening games (eg. saw/door)
4. Pictures starting with the target sound to do speaking games (double sets, cut up and laminated)



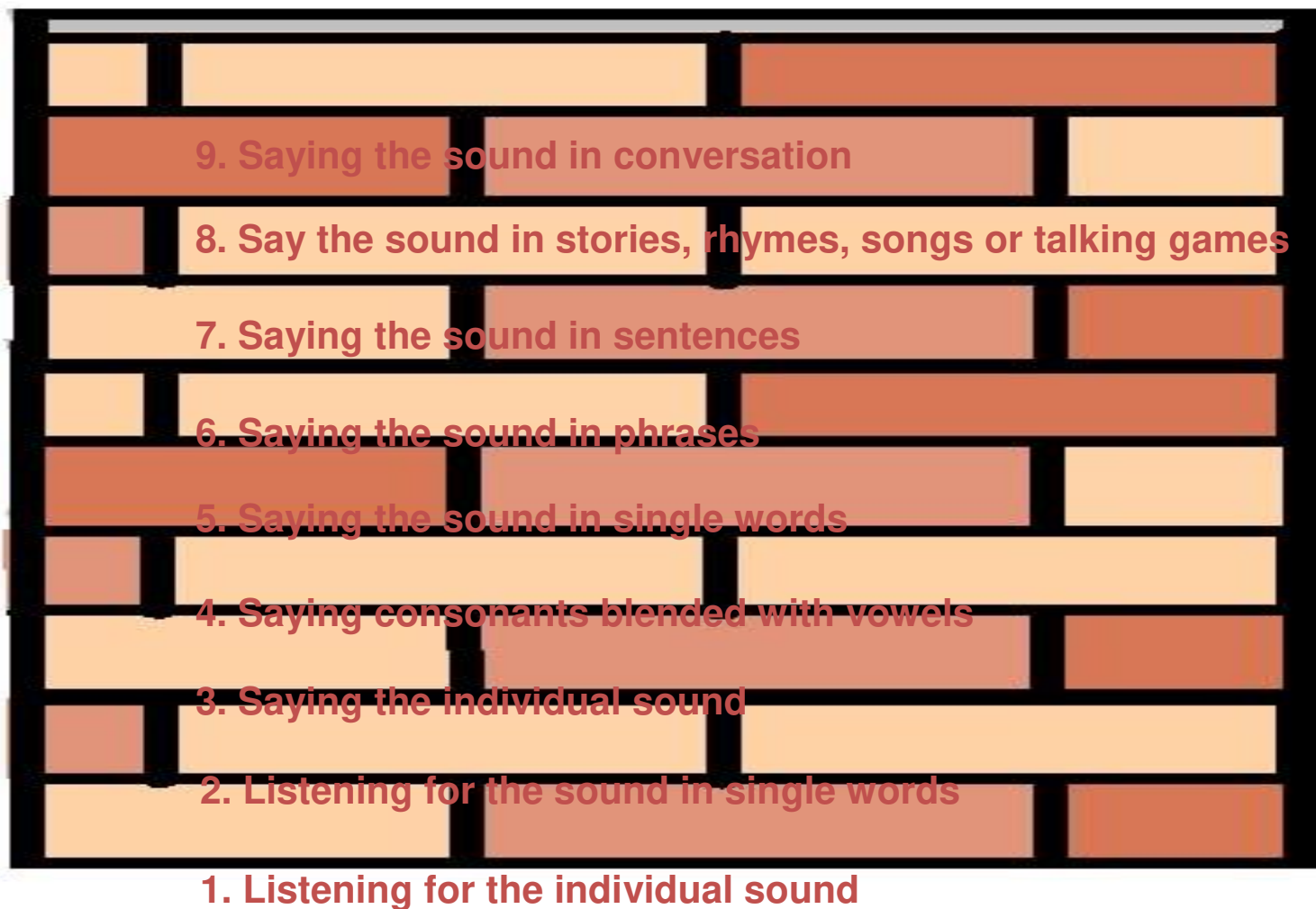
Some games that can be used for speech sound work



...more games for speech sound work



# How To Work Through A Speech programme



# Listening for the Individual Sound

Can the child hear the target sound from amongst a range of other sounds including the one they use as a substitution?  
e.g. 's' and 'd'



## Examples

Place a selection of sound cards on the table and the child has to 'splat' the one you say with a fly swotter.

Say a sound and the child has to post the picture of the one you say into a fun  
postbox.



# Listening for the Sound in Single Words

Can the child hear the difference between the target sound and the one they are using as a substitution in words?

e.g. 'saw' and 'door'



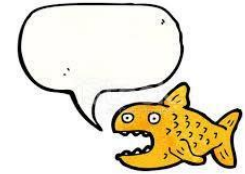
## Examples

Use a Feely bag of objects starting with 2 sounds (eg. s/d). The adult says the word of an object as they remove it from the bag and the child sorts the objects according to the first sound.

Use minimal pairs cards - rhyming words that change their meaning when one sound is changed eg. sew/dough, sip/dip. The child chooses the word said by the adult and posts it. Use activities on the advice sheet.



# Saying the individual sound



Can the child produce the sound on its own:

- a) Start off by modelling the sound and showing the child what to do with their teeth, lips. Use a sound picture and an action as well to help the child to remember the sound. A mirror could also be used.
- b) Move on to the next stage when the child can confidently produce the sound without an adult model.

NB: the SLT will give advice on how to achieve sounds.

## Examples

Play a magnetic fishing game and catch and say the target sound.

Throw a dice and the child says the target sound the number of times on the dice.

Use the ideas on the Speaking Games sheet.



# Blending the sound with a vowel to make nonsense words

Can the child say the sound + a vowel

e.g. see, sar, soo

## Examples

Attach the target sound to a toy car and 'crash' it into a vowel card while saying the sounds.


Make some monster cards and give them nonsense names eg See, Soo, Sar etc. Play pairs games with them and practise saying.

Use the ideas on the Nonsense Games sheet.



# Using the sound at the start of words

Can the child say the word when copying an adult and, later, without copying.

- Use the sound picture to remind the child to use the target sound.
- Make sure the child repeats the word many times during the session. Just focus on 4-5 words at a time but aim to say them at least 10 times each.
- Give the child the chance to hear words starting with the target sound. Look at stories which contain the target sound eg Letterland books.
- Play turn-taking games where the child has to say a word before taking a turn eg Pop Up Pirate. 
- Use the ideas on the Speaking Games sheet.

# Using the sound in two word phrases

Can the child say the word correctly in a short phrase.

Eg. blue sock

- Use the word cards you already have for the sound.
- Make up phrases for each picture before the session and write them down so you can remember them.
- Model the phrases to the child and use the same phrases every time.
- You will probably have to remind the child to use the correct target sound again as they will make mistakes again.
- Aim for the child to say the phrase without a model from you.



# Using the sound in short sentences

# Can the child say the word correctly in a short sentence.


## Eg. the blue sock is dirty.

- Use the word cards you already have for the sound.
- Make up sentences for each picture before the session and write them down so you can remember them.
- Model the sentences to the child and use the same ones every time.
- You will probably have to remind the child to use the correct target sound again as they will make mistakes again.
- Aim for the child to say the sentence without a model from you.



## Saying the sound in stories, rhymes, songs or talking games

# This will help the child to become better at using the word in sentences.

- The child chooses some of the word cards to make up silly stories or sentences together with the adult.
- Sing any relevant rhymes, tongue twisters or songs which involve the use of the target sound eg. A Sailor went to sea, sea, sea ...; she sells sea shells on the sea shore, etc.
- Play talking games like 'I went to market and I bought ...', What's the time Mr Wolf/ etc.. 

## Using the sound in conversation

Encouraging the child to use the sound in their everyday conversation.

- All adults involved with the child should support at this stage ie. parents, teacher, TA.
- Set up opportunities for the child to practise using their new sound in words eg. 5 minute chat about the weekend, topic.
- Praise the child for remembering to use the new sound in words.
- Prompt the child to correct themselves if they make a mistake eg. is it 'tea' or 'sea'?
- Use the ideas on the Generalisation sheet.



## Useful websites

- † <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/>
- † <https://www.afasic.org.uk/>
- † <https://speechlink.co.uk>

✦ [www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk)

✦ <https://www.twinkl.co.uk>

✦ <https://www.speech-language-therapy.com>

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# Thank you for your time.

# We hope you have enjoyed this training, and have found it helpful