



Happy Talk's Top 10 Tips for Speech Sound Development

1. Modelling



Model accurate speech sounds throughout the day. When your child says a word e.g. - "pig- bid" give them a positive model saying, "yes, it's a pig" so that they can hear the accurate production of a sound or word without correcting them. A child needs lots of clear adult repetitions of words to be able to learn to say them correctly. Provide plenty of opportunities for them to do this e.g. "tan I have my tuc?"- "of course you can have your cup. Here is your cup. Would you like a cup of milk or a cup of water? I have put your cup on the table."

2. Use Alternative Communication Methods

Try not to bring attention to the fact you might not have understood what your child has said. Instead say "show me" or use closed questions that require a yes or no answer to find out what they have said. You can also encourage your child to mime or gesture when they are talking to help you understand. You can do this by modelling gesture when you talk. If you are still struggling to understand them, you can say "oh dear, my ears are not working very well today I'm sorry. Silly ears!" This will help to maintain your child's confidence in communicating rather than them thinking they have been unsuccessful.



3. Emphasise Sounds



You can place emphasis on key sounds to help your child to hear them more clearly when you are talking. You can do this by adding stress to the key sound in a word and talking at a slower rate so that it can be heard more easily.

Older children may find it useful to have the sound written down for them to see. You can also point the sound out when the child is reading. You could say, "oh look, there is the 'g' sound at the end of the word 'dog.'"





4. Avoid Over-Correcting



It is natural to want to help your child to say sounds and words in the right way. Avoiding over-correcting helps to build your child's confidence. When their communication is stopped in order to correct them, this raises their awareness that they have not said a word correctly which may add to their frustration as well as impacting their confidence in communicating. It is more effective to provide lots of accurate adult models without expecting them to repeat the word correctly from you.

5. Confirm what you have understood

Repeating back what you have understood to your child helps them to know you are listening and interested in what they have said. Although it might not be possible to understand everything they have said, by repeating back what you have understood may prompt the child to give more information on what you have missed as well as building their confidence in communicating their message.



6. Use Visual Aids



Showing your child your mouth when you are talking and making sounds will help them to see how the mouth moves and where to put the different parts of their mouth e.g. lips, tongue and teeth.

Also, letting them look in a mirror helps them to see where they are putting the parts of their mouth when they are saying certain sounds.

7. Develop Listening skills

Phonological awareness skills are really important in helping to develop a child's awareness of sounds and words. It is also the foundation to learning how to read and write. You can develop these skills by playing listening games such as what sounds you can hear in the environment e.g. birds singing, car engine, lawn mower etc. Singing songs and nursery rhymes also help to develop awareness of sounds, words, rhythm, and rhyme. You could then try:

- Syllable clapping e.g. daddy- da-ddy, butterfly- bu-tter-fly
- Identifying the sound at the beginning of the word e.g. bat- b-at. I Spy is a good game to develop this skill
- Rhyming e.g. cat-hat





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8. Check Hearing



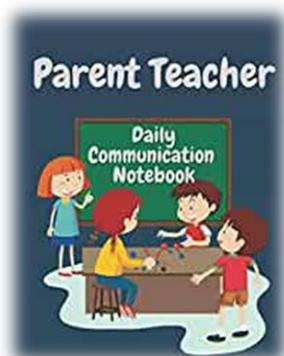
If your child has not had a hearing test recently, it would be useful to rule this out as a reason to why they are having difficulty with their speech sound development. For example, between the ages of 2 and 6, it is very common for children to experience 'glue ear' which results in dulled hearing which can be likened to hearing underwater. For a child's speech to be able to develop, they need to be able to hear the sounds they need to learn and say clearly. You can go to your GP and ask for a referral to Audiology for a hearing test.

9. Acknowledge your Child's Feelings

Not being understood can be very frustrating. If your child demonstrates that they are aware or becoming frustrated or upset about their speech, let them know that you understand they are feeling cross/upset/frustrated and that you are there to help them. This will let them know that they are not alone, that their feelings are understood and that someone is there to help.



10. Home-School Diary



When a child has speech sound difficulties, it can be hard to understand what they are saying, especially out of context. Having a home-school diary is useful so that you can see information about what your child has been doing at school/nursery and vice versa. This helps you to pre-empt what your child may be wanting to tell you about their day. You can also let school/nursery know what your child has been doing at home so that they can talk to your child about this and know what your child may be wanting to tell them about. Including pictures can be really useful as this prompts discussion about what is happening in the picture e.g. "you have baked a cake at home with mummy! It looks delicious!"

Get in Touch!



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