

First sounds and Speech Sounds

How do sounds develop?

Developmentally some sounds come later than others, generally because some are easier to say than others!

- Early sounds include: p, b, m, h, w, t and vowel sounds
- Harder sounds include: k, g, f, y, s
- Tricky sounds include: r, l, v, j, ch, st, th

How can you help?

The great thing is, it is so easy to help your child develop sounds if they have the potential to use speech.

Playing with sounds

- Listen to your child and **copying the sounds that they make** e.g. blowing raspberries
- **Babble along with your child:** “ma ma ma” “da da da” “bee bee bee” “ga ga ga”
- Trying some **new sounds** that your child doesn’t say, e.g. “la la la” “wa wa wa” “po po po”. Don’t worry if your child doesn’t say them like you do, they just need to hear you playing with sounds.
- Try **making noises** when playing with vehicles: brumm brumm, choo choo, nee-naw, weeeeeee etc or animal sounds when playing with toys or looking at pictures: Dog “woof woof” Bee “buzz buzz” Horse “neigh” Cow “moooo”. Can your child point to which animal is making the sounds?
- **Make your voice interesting** to encourage your child to listen – try making it loud and quiet, fast or slow or sound excited when you say the sounds.

Listening skills

From a very early stage children’s brains are trying to listen for information about sounds (without even realising), this means having good listening skills is really important

You could try:

- Play good old-fashioned **party games** e.g. musical statues
- Use **musical instrument** and see if you child can locate the sound while wearing a blindfold
- Go on **listening walks** to see what sounds you can hear or collect
- Play **syllable clapping** and **rhyme games**
- Put some toy animals around the room. When you make one of their sounds, your child finds the animal.



Reading books & singing songs and nursery rhymes

- Sing animal or action songs such as “ Old MacDonald’s Farm” or “The Wheels on the bus’ emphasising the sounds as you sing.
- Book that repeat words and phrases a lot are great
- Rhyming books and songs are the best e.g. Room on the broom

Model, model, model

If your child isn't using sounds yet or is playing and babbling with sounds:

- **Try using sounds for different feelings or situations:**
 - “mmmm” – lovely ice cream
 - “ahhh” – what a lovely baby
 - “oooo” – what’s hiding? “oops” – something fell
- **Use sounds to go with actions:** “bang bang” – bang saucepan lids or hammering
 - “knock knock” – knock on door or table
 - “tick tock” – clock sound
 - “ring ring” –phone or doorbell
 - “bye bye” – waving.
- **Make animal sounds** as you’re playing down on the farm, ‘bruuuum’ round the race tracks, or model ‘pppp’ whilst popping bubbles.

If your child is using words and phrases but some of the sounds you hear are incorrect:

- Don’t worry about working on specific sounds that you think you have heard your child say wrong (unless you have been asked to do this by a speech therapist) just model the word to them slowly and clearly.

It is important not to correct them: simply acknowledge what they say, model the word and repeat

- **Don’t say:** “No it isn’t a tat it is called a cat” or “Can you say cat”
Instead...
- **Acknowledge, model and repeat:** “Oh yes a cat, it is a lovely cat, hi cat”

Your child does not need to repeat the words back to you, it is enough that they hear it...



- Imagine your child’s brain is a cup and every time you say a word to them they put a bit of information about the word into the cup and store it away e.g. what sounds are in the word, the syllables or what the word means etc.
- They keep adding information to the cup till it is full and they have all the information they need to start using the word. All you need to do is help them to fill the cup – simples!

Please remember not to worry if your child isn’t using sounds and words yet. Speech is just one way we communicate, alongside gesture, signs and symbols and we should encourage children to use whatever way is easiest for them.

