

Supporting Speech and Language Development

Speech Sound Development

What is “Speech”?

Speech is the process of producing or articulating individual sounds.

There is some room for variation within what is considered to be “typical” speech sound development. Although each child develops somewhat differently, the following are some guidelines outlining the order in which speech sounds usually emerge.

Some sounds come earlier than others because they are easier to make. This may be because of:

- Where the sound is produced in the mouth (i.e., lip sounds: /p, b, m, w/ are usually the first to emerge).
- How the sound is made in the mouth (i.e., a short sounds like “t” as in “toe” is easier than a long sound like “s” as in “see”).

Sound Mastery	Sounds
First	p,b,m,w,h,t,d,n,y
Next	s,z,f,v,k,g,sh,ng
Later	ch,j,l,r,th

Age	Percentage of Speech Understood by Others
2 years	50%
3 years	75%
4 years	100% Although some speech errors may be present
6 years	Adult-like speech

Activities to Encourage Language Development

- Play guessing games like “I spy”. Give your child clues and have him/her guess what you are describing (i.e., “It’s red, you eat it, it grows on a tree.”).
- Plan daily activities together (i.e., doing laundry, grocery shopping). Talk about what you will need and what quantity, where you will find it, what steps to take, and in what order they need to be completed.
- Use advertising flyers to provide opportunities to label a variety of food, household items and stores. Cut out and sort items into categories and talk about the function of items (i.e., “a saw is for cutting wood”, “a fridge keeps food cold”, etc.).
- Bath time is wonderful for reviewing body parts and concepts such as hot/cold, wet/dry. You can target following directions by having your child use a washcloth to wash specific body parts. Also, review the sequence of tasks by talking about what you do first, next, and last.
- Spending time engaged in conversation during your shared experiences will also help build vocabulary and oral language. Provide opportunities for your child to both ask and answer questions. Use “Why” and “How” question forms to encourage verbal problem solving. Link new words to idea and concepts your child already knows.
- Have fun and learn together!