



## Speech and Language Therapy Service

# Developing Awareness of Speech Sounds

### Sounds in speech

Speech is made up of different sounds, made in different parts of the mouth, in different ways. The more children hear words and sounds, the more their brains learn about what sounds are, where they are in words and how they are the same or different.

It is important for your child's brain to develop 'speech plans' for sounds. One of the ways to do this is by over-exposing your child to words with different sounds in. This can be thought of as making a 'sound rich environment' for your child.

The activities in this leaflet are designed to help your child's brain notice sounds more, during play and normal interactions and support development of their speech sound system.

### Immerse your child in a world of sounds

- Pointing out sounds during everyday play and interactions with your child will help make them more aware of what sounds are all about, e.g. "uh oh, a dinosaur, listen 'd' for dinosaur".
  - Encouraging your child to look up at you as you sing/talk will help give their brain more information about how we make sounds and make sounds come to life, e.g. "arh a bear, watch Daddy..." bring your lips together tightly then do a nice big 'b' sound as you say "Bear".
  - When you over-expose your child to sounds (and create a 'sound rich environment'), the aim is for your child to see and hear the words and sounds, not copy them.
  - By adding little hand signals and gestures you can help your child learn where in the mouth sounds are made and what sorts of sounds they are. Search for 'cued articulation' online to find out more.
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## How to help

Here are some ideas to help over-expose your child to sounds in words. Some are quick and easy things you can do any time, others are things that you might need to prepare a little.

### Bath time 'p'

Gather a big pan and a little pan (kitchen pans are good), a range of interesting toys, figures or objects (e.g. farm animals, bouncy ball, teaspoon, etc) to 'plop' into the pans.

While your child is in the bath, give them a big pan and a little pan. Using a cup or pourer, sing the words (to the tune of 'the farmers in the den').

"**P**our it in the **pan**, **p**our it in the **pan**, **p**our the water in the **pan** and...  
(pause to create a sense of anticipation) **plop** the dinosaur in... **plop**...  
**p-p-p**"

Plop some into the big pan and some into the little pan then count up the things in each pan at the end. This gives opportunity for naming objects, learning concepts of 'big' and 'little' as well as counting.

### Tidy up time 't'

Involve your child in tidying up, singing (again, the farmer's in the den tune works well for this!)

"It's **t**ime to **t**idy up, it's **t**ime to **t**idy up, **put** all the **toys** away, it's **t**ime to  
**tidy up**"

### Story time 't'

Look out for books that have characters in them beginning with a certain sound. 'That's not my Tiger' works well for 't'. "That's not my **t**iger, his **t**ail is **t**oo soft, that's not my **t**iger his **t**eeth are **t**oo bumpy", etc. Name things several times to give your child even more opportunities to hear words, "oh yes, too bumpy, oh tiger, what bumpy teeth".

### Feather fun 'f'

Make some artwork using feathers. Print and cut out or draw pictures of things beginning with 'f' to make a collage. Stick a feather on with each picture you stick or draw/colour. Include, for example fairy, farmer, fish, fork, fan, fence, finger, leaf, roof, scarf, knife, scarf.

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Try making the feathers wobble before you stick each one down, hold it near your mouth, make a long “ffffff” sound and watch the feather wobble.

Talk about the things as you make them, saying the words as many times as you can, e.g. “look at this fairy, do you think she can fly? She could fly over the fields, over the farm, she could hide under a leaf, she could sit on the roof and have a cup of coffee. She’s a funny fairy”. “Feather on the fairy”.

Cut your pictures out and take them around the house. Play hide and seek with them and talk about where they were. “Haha, how funny, we found the fish in the bath, we found the finger under the bed”.

### **Shopping for ‘sh’**

Choose a shopping bag and set off round the house, gathering things with ‘sh’ sounds in. You could make a list and read off the list (naming each word again and again). Things to shop for: shoe, shell, a toy sheep, some shapes, something shiny, a pirate ship, some rubbish, a fish, some cars to crash, etc.

Take a video on your phone of you and your child ‘shopping’. Watch it back together (they will be listening to you saying all those lovely ‘sh’ words again).

### **Remember**

- The aim for all these activities is for your child to see and hear the words and sounds, not to say them. It’s ok if children do try to copy and say the sounds - praise them for their attempt but keep encouraging good listening.
- Add cued articulation as you say key words (e.g. ‘p’ in plop, ‘t’ in tiger, ‘f’ in farmer, ‘sh’ in shoes). This draws your child’s attention to your mouth.
- Say words and sounds clearly (though you do not need to shout) and encourage your child to look up at you as you sing/talk. Praise them for ‘good looking’.

*If you have any concerns or queries about your child’s speech, language and communication skills, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Helpline. Details can be found on our website.*

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