



What sounds should my child be saying and by what age?



If you work in early years education, you will without a doubt come across many children who present with speech sound difficulties which significantly impact their intelligibility.

'But I can understand everything they say'

As skilled communicators, we are often able to 'tune in' to a child's phonological system and after a while, we can figure out most of what they say.

As an early years educator, it is a great skill to be able to tune into a child's communication; it means that you will be able to put them at ease, connect with them and ensure that they feel seen and heard.

Parents are the same and can often be the last to realise that their child's speech is unclear because they've learnt how to 'decode' their child's speech without realising. Their child may also have learnt to effectively communicate non-verbally with gestures, which allows communication to flow relatively well and the need for speech support can consequently be dismissed.

What is the impact of speech sound delays?

At some point we need to help children repair their errors. Ongoing speech issues (as cute as they may be) can have a knock-on impact on so many areas:

- interacting with peers,
- become withdrawn/frustrated because they are not able to make themselves understood,
- frustration may lead to challenging behaviours,
- struggle to make and maintain friendships,
- difficulties learning phonics, reading and writing which can have an ongoing impact on their literacy skills through their early academic careers.

Speech sound development:

Do you know the developmental norms for speech sound development? It's important to be aware of these as we can often become overly concerned about speech issues that are actually completely age-appropriate.

[Subscribe](#) to receive a free download for a printable version of this quick reference guideline for ENGLISH speech sound development.

Speech Sounds Development Chart	
1.5 - 2 years	m n b d p t
2.5 - 3 years	d k g w y h
3 - 4 years	f s
4 - 5 years	v z sh ch j l

• the above is based on English speakers
• children are expected to be using these sounds by the stated ages and should therefore be emerging at an earlier stage.
• /th/, /r/ and blends should be emerging by 5 years.

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*This chart is for guidance purposes only; there are many variables to consider with unclear speech but this chart will give you a good place to start from.

How do you discuss your concerns with parents?

It can be difficult to pinpoint the exact challenges with a child's speech and this can make it challenging for you to confidently raise your concerns with a parent or make a referral to speech and language therapy department. Without concrete 'evidence' how do you even start that conversation?

Do you have a standard resource you use to screen for speech sounds in your setting?

Speech sound screeners can be really long and boring for children; going through a book of pictures and naming them is not actually that engaging! After about a minute (I'm being generous here!) you are likely to lose a child's attention; especially the younger children and once a child is un-engaged, their performance won't be reflective of their actual ability.

I found this was a challenge when working with my little ones online, I needed something motivating and exciting to keep their interest; and that's exactly why I created an interactive speech sounds screener that covers key sounds within initial and final word positions and more importantly is fun and engaging.




Have a quick look at this video to see a demo of how to use it, it's super fun and the children (and adults!) are loving it!

Name:

DOB:

Date:

cup		sun		shoe	
pocket		bus		fish	
ball		nose		giraffe	
web		ladder		chicken	
moon		teeth		frog	
thumb		boat		rabbit	
doll		fork			
bed		guitar			



I have tried and tested this resource and the kids cannot get enough of it! Usually I need to break up this screener over a number of sessions but with this version they LOVE it and want to keep going!

If you want the wordlist featured to get you started, you can get it [here](#) for free along with the speech sound developmental chart I referred to earlier.

And if you want to get your hands on this awesome Speech Sounds Screener you can download it from my [Teachers Pay Teachers page](#)!

But how can you actual help children with speech sound difficulties?

I know what you're thinking, it's all very well identifying speech issues but the NHS waiting lists are too long, how can you support your students without the specialist support from speech and language therapists?

Good news! There are sooooo many things you can do to help boost progress and I've made it my mission to empower early years practitioners to be proactive and make a difference for the young children they work with.

If you want to know more about things you can do to help boost children's speech development and get hold of simple tips, advice and FREE RESOURCES [sign up to my mailing list](#) you will not regret it!

And if you have any questions feel free to email me nisha@thetherapyplaceuk.com or visit my website www.thetherapyplaceuk.com

Nisha x

I want all the speech tips!



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