



## Helping Children with Unclear Speech

Some children find it difficult to say speech sounds correctly. They may change sounds for another or miss sounds off at the start or end of words. Children with speech sound difficulties may have difficulties with listening to sounds or saying sounds. There are lots of reasons children may find speech sound production difficult.

### **How can I help at home and school?**

1. Let the child know that you WANT to understand them— show this by your body language and attention— be a good listener. Encourage your child to show you another way e.g. showing, pointing or gesture so they get their message across even if they can't say the words.
2. Admit when you have not understood. Acknowledge the parts that you have understood and ask him/her to tell or show you the other bit again.
3. Repeat the child's sentence correctly to check you have understood and to provide a model for repeating the word back. Some children will copy, but do not put them under pressure to do so, hearing the correct word is enough.
4. Exaggerate the speech sound they are having difficulty with when you repeat it. This may help your child work out where they are going wrong e.g. "S...oap".
5. Be positive in your modelling and correction. Don't say. "it's not a tat, it's a cat, say cat", as this may stop them saying the word again for fear they will get it wrong. Instead repeat it back to them so they hear the word said correctly.
6. Try to end conversations successfully, even when there have been parts you have not understood.
7. Slow down- keep conversations at a slow pace.
8. To help develop their awareness of sounds—go on listening walks around the house and outside. Listen out for all the sounds they can hear, (e.g. a car door shutting verses a bin lid closing; the distant sound of dog barking). See if they can tune in to these sounds, this will help them tune in to speech sounds which are harder to discriminate between.
9. Pick a sound and look for all the items in the house which start with it, e.g. pan, peas, pots, perfume; playing I-spy with older children helps in the same way.