

How to Help Your Child Talk

A Parent's Guide to
Communication in Children





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Articulation and Speech Clarity

Children can produce most sounds accurately by five years old. When children have difficulty learning the sounds at the expected ages, it may be due to an articulation disorder. Articulation disorder is also known as "speech sound disorder" or "phonological disorder."

There are many reasons to explain why your child may experience a problem with articulation. Research shows that articulation disorders may be related to hearing loss and ear infections, or developmental disorders, such as Down's Syndrome. It can also be related to dental issues. Often the cause is unknown.



No matter what the cause, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) can help. You will want to start with a speech evaluation. Therapy will involve working on your child's targeted speech sounds.

Speech Sound Development

Children develop sounds across a large range of ages. This chart is based on the age range that 90% of children acquire these sounds.

By Age 3: P, M, H, W, N

By Age 4: B, K, G, D, F, Y

By Age 5: no new sounds

By Age 6: T, NG, R, L

By Age 7: CH, SH, J, TH (voiceless)

By Age 8: S, Z, V, TH (voiced)

Helping Your Child Achieve Clearer Speech



The prognosis for improving an articulation problem is excellent if a child receives early speech therapy services, continues with therapy, and practices their new skills routinely.

The most common approach to speech therapy is known as articulation therapy. In articulation therapy, speech therapists can work with your child to improve or correct speech sounds in a phonological system.

Although speech therapy is vital in correcting articulation problems, here are some ways to help your child with articulation skills outside of treatment.

Be Positive and Descriptive

When your child tries to create a sound but misses the target, congratulate them for trying and describe where they should have placed their tongue instead.

Model Correct Production

Modeling correct production is a technique in which you repeat what your child has just said but with the correct pronunciation. You can practice modeling correct production in almost any setting, but try to stay on their eye level so that they can watch your mouth move as you say the sound correctly.

Repeat Successful Sounds

Practice your child's targeted sounds 5-10 minutes/day. You will want to have your child repeat the same sound accurately to learn to produce it consistently. This approach is critical in helping to make the correct sound. Suggested activities to make practice fun include "I spy," matching game, and scavenger hunts.

Avoid Imitating Your Child's Errors

Instead of imitating the ways your child pronounces or leaves out sounds, show them how to say it correctly.

What Are Language Disorders?

There are two primary language disorders; receptive language disorder and expressive language disorder.

Receptive Language Disorder

A receptive language disorder is a problem with a child's ability to understand what other people say.

Expressive Language Disorder

An expressive language disorder is when a child has a problem getting a clear message across to others.

Mixed Expressive-Receptive Language Disorder

Sometimes children have both language disorders simultaneously, which is called a mixed receptive-expressive language disorder.



A receptive and expressive language evaluation can include a parent interview, obtaining a language sample, and administering standardized tests. Your child is likely to be asked questions about different pictures, objects, and stories.

If you have concerns about your child's language skills, don't hesitate to schedule an evaluation by a speech-language pathologist. Early treatment is key to achieving positive results!

Characteristics of Language Disorders in Children

Children with Receptive Language Disorders May Have Problems With:

- Following verbal instructions
- Reading comprehension
- Answering questions
- Taking turns during a conversation
- Understanding another's perspective

Children with Expressive Language Disorders May Have Problems With:

- Use of vocabulary
- Creating grammatically correct sentences
- Telling a story in order
- Clearly conveying a concept or idea
- Recalling words

How To Improve Your Child's Language Skills

1 Keep It Simple

Choose words that are simple and to the point to support effective communication between you and your child. Also, keep your sentences short. For example, “Dinner time now!” or “Build a big tower!”.

2 Read

Take the time to read to your child every day. Label everything you see on the pages of a book and encourage the child to point to the words and pictures as you talk about them. Books that contain repetitive content are excellent choices.

3 Use Music and Play

Sing with your child. Use songs with rhyme and repetition. Make good eye contact with your child and use lots of vocal inflection. Try leaving out words in familiar songs to see if your child can say the word.

4 Limit Your Choices

When you are unsure what your child wants, hold out just two items and point to each while saying the item's name aloud. This will lessen the stress of having too many choices.

5 Label Items

Talk with your child about what you are doing and what you see in your environment. Pause to provide the opportunity for your child to respond.



Stuttering

Stuttering occurs when the natural flow of speech is interrupted. You may notice blocks of silence when your child has difficulty producing sounds during speech.

Stuttering can be characterized by repetitions of words, syllables, sounds, prolongations (drawing out a sound), or abnormal stoppages (no sound). Stuttering is also called a "disfluency" and is sometimes referred to as "stammering." The severity of stuttering can vary widely among individuals.

The exact causes of stuttering are still unknown, but many researchers now consider stuttering to involve differences in brain activity that interfere with the production of speech. In some people, stuttering has a genetic link. It may be tied to stress and anxiety and can develop at any age.

To diagnose stuttering, you will want to seek an evaluation from a qualified and experienced speech pathologist with expertise in treating children who stutter.

Although there is no simple cure for stuttering, children who stutter can learn to speak more confidently and clearly with speech therapy.

Research shows that early therapeutic intervention to be the most effective, so don't wait if you think your child stutters.



When to Seek Help

- If your child's stuttering is getting worse over time and continues longer than a few months.
- If your child is consistently stuttering after the age of three.
- If you notice your child avoiding social situations or talking with other people.
- If you notice tension, facial grimaces, or struggle behaviors during talking.

Improving Fluency

Tips For Parents of Children Who Stutter

Provide Support

Children have many words and thoughts, so avoid interrupting your child and let them finish their thought. Do not finish their sentences for them, even if their speech is filled with blocks of silence.

Stay Positive

Parents should let their children know that stuttering is frustrating, but do not let the child get so caught up in negative emotions that it affects their speech. Praising your child for their calmness and ability to speak well despite the stuttering will help them feel empowered.

Model Relaxed Speech

Try to speak to your child in an unhurried, relaxed way, pausing frequently. This will have a calming effect on your child and lessen the pressure to keep up. It also models the way we want your child to speak.



Refrain from Giving Advice

Phrases such as "slow down" or "take a breath" will draw attention to the fluency problem. When you use these phrases, your child may think you disapprove of them. This may make them nervous or uncomfortable and lead to more tension and stuttering. Instead of giving advice, listen to your child and repeat or rephrase the stuttered phrase with relaxed speech.

Be Patient

Allow your child time to respond after you've spoken. If your child feels rushed or pressured to talk, they may become nervous, which might affect their fluency.

About Voice Disorders

A voice disorder is a problem in the pitch, quality, volume, or tone of the voice.

The most common reason for a voice disorder to develop in a child is a trauma of the vocal folds, or "vocal misuse." Examples of vocal misuse include:

- yelling
- making loud play sounds
- throat clearing
- excessive coughing

When children engage in these behaviors, the vocal folds can press tightly against each other, causing blister-like bruises. The bruises can make the voice sound hoarse, raspy and alter the pitch and loudness of the voice. If your child's hoarse voice has lasted for 2-4 weeks, you may want to have it evaluated.

However, don't wait that long to address voice hoarseness. As soon as you notice hoarseness in your child, you can implement vocal hygiene strategies.

Some voice disorders can be treated with voice therapy. Others need to be treated by a doctor who specializes in the voice. Certain medications might be prescribed, or surgery may be recommended to fix the problem.



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When we started voice therapy, my child was struggling with her voice. Just 6 weeks later, not only has her voice improved dramatically, but we have the tools to continue to keep her voice healthy from now on.



- Georgia G., parent

Helping Your Child with Their Voice

Encourage Hydration

Encourage your child to drink plenty of water and avoid caffeinated beverages and chocolate. Your child will be able to produce a louder voice with less effort if the vocal folds are sufficiently hydrated.

Teach Quiet Talking

Shouting, screaming, and extended loud talking can harm the delicate vocal folds, so teach your child other ways of communicating. For example, ask your child to walk closer to other people to talk to tap them on the shoulder to get their attention. Talk to them about using their "indoor voice" or "quiet voice." Reduce background noise by turning off the TV or music when speaking.



Consider The Surrounding Environment

Some aspects of your child's environment can be triggers for hoarseness. Some examples of things that you should consider having your child avoid include:

- environmental allergens (i.e., pet dander, pollen)
- dust
- smoke
- chemicals and cleaners

Be A Good Example

Remember to model good vocal behaviors at home. If everyone in the family uses their "inside voices" and takes turns speaking, your child will be more likely to use these healthy vocal habits on their own!

Learn More

Experts in communication studies have compiled the information presented in this e-book.

The aim is to provide you with easy-to-apply techniques that you can use to improve your child's communication skills. Remember, these solutions are not one-size-fits-all, as you will need to find what works best for you and your unique situation.

One important thing to keep in mind when working on communication skills is that change does not happen overnight. It takes time, patience, and practice to see results.

Be sure to allow your child to make mistakes and learn from them. And above all, have fun with it!

If you are looking for more information on communication problems or want to learn more about our programs, set up a complimentary phone consultation with our lead speech pathologist.



Book Your Free Consultation Today!!

Our Story

Connected Speech Pathology is the leading online speech therapy provider in the industry. Online therapy is convenient for families and effectively delivers the treatment your child needs.

Connected Speech Pathology is known for our team of energetic, caring, and highly trained speech pathologists from across the country. Our team of speech pathologists has a combined average of at least 15 years of experience.

Our philosophy has been handed down from our owner to the entire team, using the latest research and integrating it with holistic, child-centered care.



Some of the problems our expert team can help with include:

- Articulation
- Hoarseness
- Stuttering
- Expressive and Receptive Language

We also provide coaching services for:

- Apraxia of Speech
- Vocal Cord Dysfunction (VCD)
- Social Skills Training
- Parent Coaching for Children < 5 years



Our experience with Connected Speech Pathology was wonderful. From the quick response to my first email, to having my son assessed and starting his therapy, it was all easy and convenient.



- Christine G.

Let's Get Started!

[Schedule A Free Consultation](#)

or visit www.connectedspeechpathology.com/get-started



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