

Hi-Ability friends and family,

During this time of uncertainty, rest assured that your Hi-ability team is here for guidance, peace of mind, reassurance and tips to aid in making this time as stress free as possible. It may be easy to become overwhelmed or feel lost. During this time we encourage you to shift your perspective from a time of fear and stress to an opportunity for growth and learning. We have put together some ways to simply incorporate your child's speech and language into your everyday lives.

1. Have your child/children help around the house

This is a great opportunity to work on simple life skills- have your child make the bed, help sort laundry (dark/lights/colors, socks/shirts/underwear, bedding/towels, etc), match socks, load/unload the washer or dryer, help with washing/drying dishes, loading/unloading the dishwasher, help in the yard, sort his/her toys by color, size, category. Although these tasks may seem trivial- they actually target many therapy goals that we work on every week- following directions, sorting, categorizing, sequencing, completing adult-directed task. Focus on one task a day even if it's only for a few minutes at a time.

2. Take this time to have your child help make their own food

This is another important activity of daily living to work on at home. It may be as simple as pour a glass of milk or their own cereal or as complex as helping make a pizza, eggs or whatever your family may be having for dinner. Give your child a task to assist in the process for example washing the fruits or veggies, plucking herbs, mixing, pushing the button on the blender, etc. Get creative and engage your child, teach them! This can work on therapy skills such as following directions, attention, making choices, vocabulary and more. *Apps for cooking with kids: Issa's Edible Adventures, Grandma's Kitchen, Dr Panda Restaurant, Toca Kitchen, My Panda Chef.*

3. Pretend play

Engage in imagination and play. Dress up in costumes, play with barbies, toy cars, stuffed animals. This will give your child the opportunity to connect with you while "being a kid" let the child lead by selecting the toys, you can join in while providing models and language exposure. Use descriptive language "The big shiny red car is going fast." When it comes to play, the possibilities are endless. Learning does not always take place while seated at a table in a structured environment.

4. Get messy

Explore different textures: dirt, shaving cream, wet/dry pasta, beans, pudding, jello, paints. This is great for sensory exploration, talk about how things feel, smell, look, sounds.

5. Get physical

Have a dance party, go for walks, set up an obstacle course. *GoNoodle videos on Youtube* are educational videos that can help your child exercise.

6. Sing

Singing is a great way to encourage verbal communication.

7. Read a book

Designate a story time during the day. Allow your child to choose the book, ask questions ("what happened in the story?", "what happened first/last?" "What do you think will happen next?" "Retell me the story"), encourage them to elaborate on the story, label pictures they see, read if they can- listen if they can not, identify letters, colors, shapes or whatever else they may see. Talk about items you see- how there used, what they are for, how they work.

Storyline Online is a website that provides free online books.

International Children's Library Online is a library of books that are available in a variety of languages.

Learning A through Z is an educational website that will be providing free access to families needing.

RAZ-KIDS has interactive reading activities at various levels and will allow free trials.

8. Breathing exercises and guided meditation

This is a great way to assist in relaxation, your child may be having a hard time being off their routine or schedule. Putting some time aside to breath may be helpful in easing anxiety. "Breath in through your nose to smell the roses, exhale through your mouth to blow out the candles" model this with your child taking 10 deep inhalations/exhalations at a time. There are several examples and videos available on YouTube.

9. In the car

Most people are familiar with at least some version of the alphabet game where you take turns going through the alphabet thinking of an animal or a food that starts with each letter of the alphabet. When targeting speech sounds you can play a similar game, only instead of thinking of animals that start with the letter k you might think of as many words as you can that start with the /k/ sound like "cat," "cookie" and "kite." You take turns going back and forth until someone is stumped and can't think of another word.

10. Sidewalk chalk

There is so much fun to be had and so many possibilities with side walk chalk. You could create your own hopscotch game with speech words, make your own life size board game with speech words, or simply draw letters, numbers, shapes and just color in the driveway. Let your kids have a great time expressing their creativity on the concrete canvas of the driveway all while practicing the sounds and/or language they need work on at the same time.

11. Picture Scavenger Hunt/"I spy with my little eyes....."



Go through the house and or yard and take pictures of as many things as you can that start with your targeted sound OR you can name an object and see if your little one can identify it!

12. Playdough fun

Draw a word out of a hat (this could come from the **worksheets** here on Mommy Speech Therapy, the words in **Articulation Station**, or you could think of your own words), then shape your playdough into that word. Have the other players guess what you have created. For extra points you could have them say the word in a sentence OR if your little one isn't working on sounds yet just work on following directions (i.e. make a snake, make a ball, etc) and just explore the playdough!

13. Flashlight Hide and Seek

Turn off the lights, shine a flash light on a common object around your house and ask your child if they can label it, maybe ask them what it's for (i.e. shine the light on a chair, what do we do with a chair?). Let them have a turn with the flashlight, this can be a great opportunity for you to model and expand language (i.e. "it's a big, red wood rocking chair

VISUALS

If your child is a visual learner, here are some things that can help. Visuals that are often included in therapy are: first/then boards (for example "first we read a book, then we get to play outside"), visual reinforcers such as " I am working for," and visual schedules to help the child know what to expect.

Symbol-it app- is a free downloadable app that will put symbols to spoken words.

Smarty Symbols Online- is a website that will provide full free month access to families needing access to visuals. You can create activities, download visual supports, access pre-made resources like schedules while kids stay at home.

We have attached some helpful information for you to review. Please feel free to reach out via email should you have any specific questions about your child and how you can facilitate their specific goals at home. Stay safe!

Sincerely,

Melissa Corcos Mcorcos@annstorckcenter.org

Jess Corcos Jcorcos@annstorckcenter.org

Jennifer Sloodsky Jsloodsky@annstorckcenter.org

A Parent's Guide To: Home Reinforcement

How to Support Your Child in Speech
Therapy



CONTENT

1. Introduction

10 Warning Signs Of A Speech Disorder In Your Child **3**

Will My Child Outgrow His Speech Challenge? **4**

2. Parent Involvement

How To Develop Correct Speech Habits At Home **6**

7 Ways To Build Confidence In Kids With Speech Disorders **8**

Make S.M.A.R.T Speech Therapy Goals **10**

Tips For Keeping Your Child Motivated to Achieve His Speech Goals **11**

3. At Home Activities

Speech Therapy Exercises For Children **13**

5 Ways To Use Technology For Speech Therapy At Home **15**

Look For Proven Specific Tools: Speech Buddies **16**

1. Introduction

10 Warning Signs Of A Speech Disorder In Your Child

What exactly is a speech disorder?

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, a speech disorder is when a person is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, or where normal speech is disrupted. Articulation disorders, speech impediment, and stuttering are examples of speech disorders. Both adults and children can suffer from speech disorders and they can occur as a result of a medical problem or have no known cause. Speech disorders involve difficulty in producing certain sounds such as "s" or "r". As your child matures, his or her speech pattern should become more understandable and generally, he should be speaking clearly by the age of

eight. While all children develop at different rates, it's important to ensure that your child is showing continuous language growth and progression. Depending on the specific speech condition of your child, symptoms can vary, but there are some essential signs that every parent should watch for as their children grow and develop.

10 Communication Milestones

1. Your child does not interact socially starting in infancy
2. He does not follow or understand what you say (starting at 1 year)
3. She says only a few sounds, words, or gestures (18 months to 2 years)
4. Her words are not easily understood (18 months to 2 years)
5. She does not combine words (starting at 2 years)
6. He has a limited vocabulary (age 2-3 years)
7. She says p, b, m, h, and w incorrectly in words (1-2 years)
8. She says k, g, f, t, d, and n incorrectly in words (2-3 years)
9. He produces speech that is unclear, even to familiar people (2-3 years)
10. He is not using 2-3 word sentences to ask for things (by 3 years)

If you think your child is exhibiting any of these warning signs of speech disorder, it's important to seek the advice of a pediatrician or speech language therapist. **Early intervention is the key** to prevention and elimination of a speech disorder at any age. For additional detailed information, The **National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)** has an online checklist available for parents who are concerned about their children's speech and communication development.

Will My Child Outgrow His Speech Challenge?



This question not only nags at all parents who are faced with addressing a child's speech challenge, but is one that speech-language pathologists (SLPs) must seriously consider before beginning treatment. This chapter aims to shed some light on this often murky question and to arm you with better information so that you may be more informed partners in the treatment decision-making process.

Three Factors Determine if a Speech Challenge Can Be Outgrown

The three most important factors, in general order of importance, for determining whether a speech challenge is likely or unlikely to spontaneously correct are the age of the child, severity of the child's speech challenge, and a child's and/or his family history of a speech challenge. The SLP must carefully weigh each factor, often in conjunction with a speech screening or full evaluation, to come up with a more definitive decision on whether to proceed with therapy.

1. How old is your child?

Speech is the most complex thing we humans do on a daily basis, from a motoric, movement-based standpoint. Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising that it can

take time for the average child to develop accurate, fluent speech. Perhaps the first question SLPs ask of a parent who contacts them is: "how old is your child?" In reality, certain misarticulations are, in fact, normal. For example, it is normal for a three-year old to say "wock" for "rock". Should that child continue to substitute /w/ for /r/ at age seven, that would almost certainly be something that should be clinically

addressed. But, this question of age of the child represents a bit of a balancing act. Research continues to reveal that intervening early is absolutely key. Yet we wouldn't want to intervene in a case where the child would spontaneously correct his errors (i.e. "grow out of it"). If there's any doubt regarding this question of age with a particular speech error, the next thing SLPs do is look at the child's overall level of speech intelligibility and how many different speech sounds he is having trouble with.

2. How severe is the speech challenge?

Let's assume a misarticulated /r/ is the only sound a child is



having difficulty with. This would very likely represent a mild articulation disorder. Typically, an SLP will adopt a “wait and see” approach if that child is still in kindergarten or below. However, with every six month period with no self-correction, the SLP will be more likely to recommend treatment. If that same kindergartner has difficulty with /s/, /sh/, in addition to the /r/, the SLP would be much more likely to recommend treatment as soon as possible.

3. What is the family history of speech challenges?

The next consideration that certainly goes hand in hand

with the severity of a child’s misarticulations is whether that child has had a history of speech errors and/or speech therapy or if speech errors run in that child’s family. If a child was seen by an SLP at age three to treat, for example, misarticulated /k, g, v, f/, then it is considerably more likely that a misarticulated /s/ or /r/ at age five will also require treatment. In these cases, especially with /s/, an SLP will sometimes bump down his age threshold for treatment to 4 years. Since, there is a strong genetic connection in speech challenges.

If an older sibling or parent had therapy, SLPs tend to address a child’s speech

challenges a little earlier than they normally would when no family history of speech challenges is present.

A full speech evaluation by a licensed SLP is the most definitive answer to whether a child may outgrow his speech challenge. However, many parents may not need to go to those lengths to get a better sense of where their child’s speech stands. Age, severity and child/family history of speech challenges are all highly significant factors in determining whether to intervene at a given juncture. Knowing this information should empower you to help make better decisions in your child’s development journey.



2. Parent Involvement

How To Develop Correct Speech Habits At Home

Whether or not your child has been diagnosed with a speech sound disorder, there are many things you can do at home to help develop correct speech habits. You can even start developing these habits

when your child makes his first babbles! Every child develops at a different rate and there is a wide range of what is considered normal in a child's language development. You can take an active role in

helping encourage your child's speech and language development, just by adding a few easy steps into your daily routine. Here are a few tips for you depending on the age of the child.

From Birth through Two Years Old:

- **Imitate** your baby's actions and facial expressions.
- **Teach** your child to imitate your actions. Think of actions such as clapping your hands, blowing kisses, playing peek-a-boo with your hands.
- **Narrate** your day. Talk about the activities that you are doing such as taking a bath, going for a walk, putting on clothes, eating dinner.
- **Identify** colors, alphabet letters or numbers when you see them.
- **Demonstrate** the sounds that animals make, for example when you see a dog, make the "woof" sound, or the "meow" sound for a cat.
- **Use** real words rather than using baby talk. Sure it's cute, but the earlier your child hears language spoken properly, the earlier your child will begin to use it.



Age Two through Four Years Old:

- Use concise, **clear speech** that is easy for your child to understand.
- Ask **leading questions** that can't be answered with a simple Yes or No. For example, "Which piece of fruit would you like?" or "What would you like to do today?"
- Teach your child simple nursery rhymes or songs that demonstrate **patterns of speech**.
- **Encourage description** by pointing out pictures of family members and friends in photos. Ask your child to identify whom she is seeing in the picture.



Age Four through Six Years Old:

- Expand on your child's speech and reiterate what he has said by repeating the phrase in a **complete sentence**. For example, if your child is saying "black dog", answer your child with "you are right, that is a big black dog outside."
- Ask your child to **discuss** his or her day, rather than simply asking, "How was your day?" You can have your child tell you three favorite things that happened in the day.
- Practice **attentive listening**. Its hard when we have a busy house, but the more you can show your child you are interested by giving him good eye contact and paying attention to what he is saying, the more often you'll find him talking to you.
- **Be patient**. Your child is taking in the world around him at lightening speed! Give him a chance to respond in a thoughtful way.

You may already be incorporating these steps into your daily communication, and if so – good job! If not, try to add one or two more strategies to your communication with your child. Before you know it, the two of you will be engaging in a satisfying and most likely entertaining conversation!

7 Ways To Build Confidence In Kids With Speech Disorders

Speech disorders and delays can not only effect how children are able to communicate, but also their confidence and self-esteem. When this happens, their behavior, learning, and relationships can be affected to various degrees. In fact, some researchers propose that kids with speech delays can be more at risk for things such as bullying because they can seem more reclusive. There are ways, however, that parents, teachers, and caregivers can help build confidence and ease frustrations.

1. Help them meet other kids with speech disorders.

If your child is the only one in his class with a speech delay, he might already feel the pressure of being different. Introduce him to other kids who face some of the same challenges. When kids feel like they are not the only ones experiencing a

challenge, they feel a sense of belonging. Belonging – having comrades – not only helps to provide comfort, but can be a great resource for support and possible tools for speech therapy techniques.

2. Teach them how to set goals that build confidence.

We gain confidence in part from experiencing failure, trying again, and achieving success. The goals don't need to be about anything speech related, but maybe a hobby or school project. Talk about how to set goals that are specific and broken down into steps – not just generalized statements like I want to become a great hockey player.

3. Include exercise and healthy eating and sleeping habits.

Research has shown that overall physical health is closely tied with mental health. Make sure your kids have lots of opportunities for healthy physical activity, and that they are getting enough rest at night. Pay attention to their diets, too, because some foods can cause hyperactivity in some children, making it harder for them to focus and feel like they can accomplish their goals. Exercises like yoga can have calming effects on both the mind and the body.

Did you know...

Michael Phelps, one of the greatest Olympians of all time with a record 22 medals (18 of them gold!) has a lisp.



4. Pay attention to your own communication with your kids.

As parents we say so much to our own kids, even without words. No matter if kids are struggling with speech disorders, learning disabilities, bullying, or family issues, as parents we need to show them that our relationship with them is solid, and that we have confidence in their abilities. Maintain eye contact when they are speaking with you, don't finish their sentences for them, and give them enough time to communicate with you.

5. Volunteer together.

Sometimes the best way to take the focus off of one's own problems or challenges is to help someone else overcome their own. Volunteering gives kids the opportunities to meet others with challenges, learn about their own capabilities, and accomplish goals. Look for ways to volunteer together that highlight your child's strengths and don't rely on communication skills.

6. Avoid constant praise.

Even though it sounds counterintuitive, praise doesn't necessarily build confidence. Instead, point out to your child the facts without adding extra value. Talk about things your child has mastered, and ask them what they are working on learning or doing next. It is also important to remember that there is a fine line between praising the child and praising the process. Praise the effort and the action, but don't place the value directly on the person.

7. Help them find opportunities to build self-esteem.

Kids who have hobbies or special interests can have more opportunities for success, which can help build confidence. Encourage your child to take a cooking or art class, join a sport team, or take up a hobby she can do at home with you. These activities that focus on other abilities and strengths provide positive outlets for energy and personal growth.



Make S.M.A.R.T Speech Therapy Goals

Speech therapy can be tiring, hard work, and sometimes even a source of insecurity among peers. With the SLP help your son or daughter set and reach speech therapy goals using a traditional business model – S.M.A.R.T. – and you'll find that speech therapy might just get a little easier, and the goals a little closer.

S– Specific: Establish very specific goals. The general goal of “improve articulation” can seem overwhelming and unobtainable for kids. The more specific the goal the greater the likelihood that your child will feel empowered and capable. Answer the following questions:

- Who? (child, child w/parent, or child/SLP combo)
- What? (specific goal)
- When? (days/times during week)
- Where? (at SLP's office, in home, on the go)
- How? (any extra tools/supplies needed)

M– Measurable: Look for measurable ways your child can work on speech therapy goals. This might mean playing 2 vocabulary games, completing 3 worksheets, or attending a month of therapy appointments.

A– Achievable: Some speech disorders are more difficult to treat than others and the goals for your child should be achievable based on his specific challenges. Make sure your child has the resources needed to make the goals achievable, both in time and in tangible supplies. Help your child navigate any obstacles that might otherwise prevent him from tackling the goal.

R– Realistic: Make sure that the steps needed to reach the goal are healthy, logical, and in line with the overall objectives of the SLP. A goal of “no stuttering by end of summer” for a child who is just beginning speech therapy for stuttering is not only unlikely to happen so swiftly (if at all), but it can create an unhealthy self-image for the child. A better goal would be “improve pacing of speech during class presentations” because it is specific and uses positive language.

T– Timely: Make sure to incorporate time-related markers for the goals. Time is tangible, measurable, and specific. Some examples of these might be:

- Work on speech therapy flashcards for 15 minutes 4 days a week
- Improve articulation when reading the /r/ sounds book in 3 weeks
- Attend speech therapy group sessions at least 2 times this month



Tips For Keeping Your Child Motivated to Achieve His Speech Goals

Despite the bubbles and the iPads, speech therapy isn't always all fun and games, it can be hard work! Speech therapy can be challenging for a host of reasons. It often occurs in small spaces, at a tabletop, and a variety of demands are placed on the child. While the goal of therapy is to work towards achieving goals, it's also to keep kids motivated. Like most things in life, motivation is key and can have a significant impact on progress. Make sure you and the SLP are on the same page and understand what motivates your child to succeed.



Variables that Impact Progress in Speech Therapy.

Age: A lot of variables come with the child's age. Older children might be aware of their speech and language challenges and motivated to improve them. Conversely, they might feel self conscious and easily discouraged when therapy doesn't come easy. For young children, in particular, it is often difficult for them to comprehend the goal of therapy and therefore, **play-based tasks are essential** in keeping them engaged and interested.

Attention: Children might struggle with a variety of attention difficulties including sensory needs, distractability, impulsivity or other communication barriers such as poor comprehension that make therapy a struggle. **A tangible token system may be helpful.**

Know what motivates your child.

To keep your child engaged, first, decide what motivates him. This may seem obvious but what does your child like? Make sure the therapist is aware of what motivates your child. Generic stickers are not always good enough to float every child's boat.

Rewards

Rewards can be great at keeping children working towards the end of an activity. Be sure to alert the child as to how much work they have to do in order to earn the reward (work for 10 minutes, 5 worksheets, 10 articulation targets). A reward can be almost anything, here are some ideas:

- Music (play song, a part of a song, or sing it)
- Videos (watch a clip, make your own)
- Puzzle pieces (one at a time)
- Sticker charts
- Games (anything goes here, basketball, iPad, etc)
- Points earned for good work

Rewards during therapy and or homework need to be short, to keep the focus of therapy on the actual work at hand. Some children appreciate being given a choice between rewards. It might be best offer them choices before they work, therefore feeling a little more ownership over the activity.

Motivating Activities During Therapy

If a child really likes a subject or character (Elmo, Thomas the Train, dogs), try to make it the subject of speech therapy. For example, use multiple exemplars of a character, such as wearing different outfits, colors or doing different actions to elicit vocabulary (e.g., yellow Elmo, red Elmo, Elmo running, Elmo dancing). Using the characters in your lesson is sometimes enough to keep kids interested without additional rewards.



Do not forget the value of verbal praise and positive comments!

3. At Home Activities

Speech Therapy Exercises For Children

There are a wide variety of reasons to work on speech therapy exercises at home. Sometimes, a parent is not sure if her child needs to see a speech therapist and would like to do some speech therapy exercises at home first. Perhaps your child's teacher has expressed concern that he has some stuttering, or needs help in speech skills. Or, your child is

already seeing an SLP and you would like to supplement what he is learning with at-home activities.

Here is a list of exercises, tools and activities just for you. Each exercise is designed to engage your child and stimulate language and speech production. Remember, therapy sessions, especially for children under

the age of three should be FUN! Your child may not cooperate if he feels like he is in a formal learning environment. Children need to enjoy their activities in order to learn. While a little structure is okay, let your child walk around the room, wiggle and giggle to get the most out of your time together.

Music

Many children sing more than they talk! Through singing and song, children can actually achieve improved articulation skills, just from belting it out. Even simple children's nursery rhymes can help develop pronunciation and articulation skills. For children who need any type of speech and language therapy, music is essential. It is motivating, familiar, rhythmic, stimulates a variety of senses and most of all – FUN!

Music as speech therapy is often used in early intervention of a speech impediment or disorder. "The Wheels on the Bus," "Row Row Row your Boat" or "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" are staples of an SLP's repertoire. Music is essential to our younger generation's growth and development.



Flash Cards

Flash cards can help kids in speech therapy to focus on the sounds that they have difficulty with. You can help make it more entertaining by providing an activity for kids to do along with them or a reward when done correctly. For example, a small piece of candy (chewable is good for strengthening jaw muscles) after saying a certain number of sounds on the language cards correctly.

Mirror Exercises

Many kids with articulation problems don't understand how to move their mouths to make sounds correctly. Speaking in front of a mirror can help a child to see how her mouth moves when she makes particular sounds. You can articulate each sound slowly and correctly to model proper positioning for your child and demonstrate the differences in the mirror.

Frog Hop

This is a simple game to help get your child to repeat the same word six times. Choose six words that you want to practice. Slide each word into a clear plastic paper protector, aka "lily pads". Spread the plastic lily pads all over the room. Have your child hop to each lily pad, each time saying the word. After he hops to all six of the lily pads and says the word correctly, your little frog may want a tasty fly as a reward!

Guess Who?

This is a fun board game by Hasbro that helps children identify everyday items such as cars, animals, foods and sea creatures. Not only does this game teach problem-solving, it encourages proper character identification and socialization skills. Beware, you may find yourself playing it over and over!

5 Ways To Use Technology For Speech Therapy At Home

Can technology help dedicate time to working on speech therapy at home? Absolutely! If you have access to mobile device such as an iPad, there are many free apps and online resources that can help your child improve his or her communication skills with speech therapy at home. Here are some great resources for you.

Articulation Station – A free app from Little Bee Speech with six different engaging activities. The design of the app is built to follow a process of articulation therapy that focuses on words, sentences, and story building. It can be used at home by parents or as part of a speech therapy program. Also, look for the recently reviewed Articulation Test Center app in which our own Gordy Rogers gave it two thumbs up!

Pinterest – Yes, even Pinterest has educational, inspirational and fun activities that you can do with your children. You will find “apps of the week”, ideas for sound articulation games, etc.

Speech Buddies University – If you’re looking for free online access to customized word games, you don’t have to look any further than right here at Speech Buddies. You can join our online University to gain access to a practice schedule that you can follow with your child. Speech Buddies University can be used with or without Speech Buddies tools and is a terrific complement to speech therapy in a clinic or speech therapy at home.

Playing With Words 365 – This site that is dedicated to helping kids improve speech has a “freebies” page filled with free, effective, and engaging activities and ideas for your little ones. You’ll find resources for vocabulary, writing and reading concepts, speech and sound development, and much more.

House of Learning by Smarty Ears – This is a creative app for the iPad that was developed by a speech language pathologist to serve as a tool for learning and playing. This app helps children practice language skills, in particular prepositions and story-telling.



Look For Proven Specific Tools: Speech Buddies

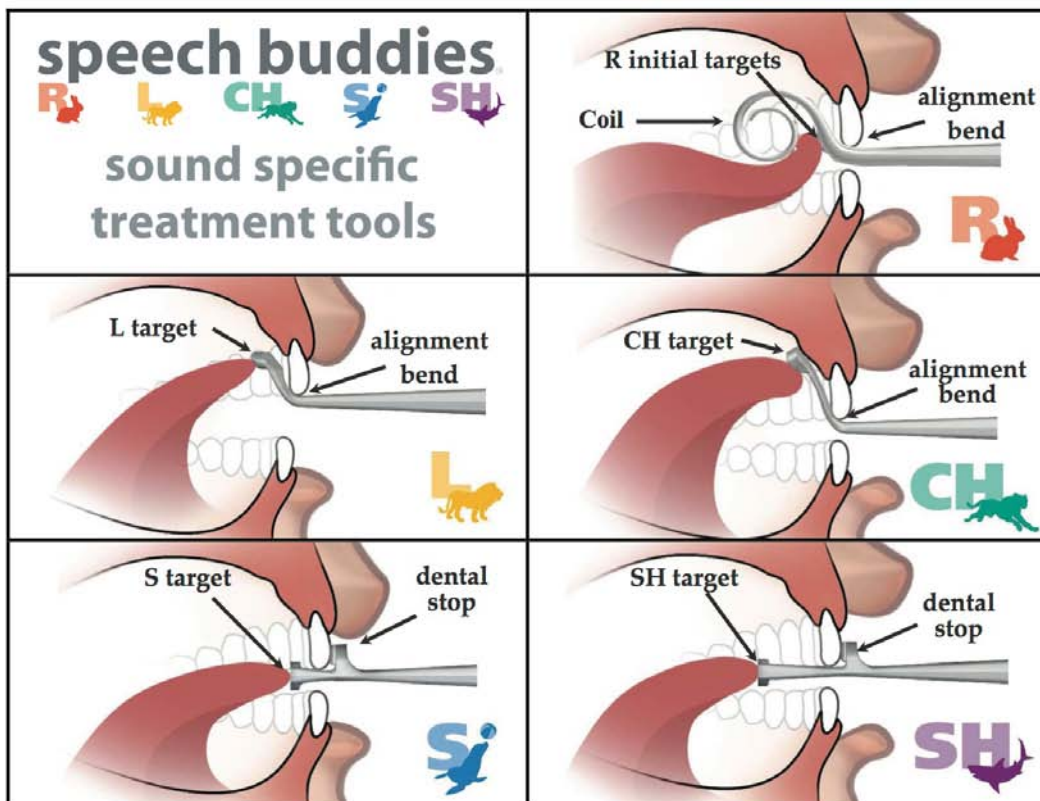
Hand-held items are often effective tools for speech therapy. Tactile tools target a range of skill sets from fine and gross motor, articulation, voice and stuttering, listening and sensory skills. Tactile tools allow kids to practice speech sounds, provide appropriate sensory options and can be used in any setting, whether it be home, at a speech therapist's office or even at school.

What about that old wives tale about using a straw or a whistle as a speech therapy tool? Yes, sometimes people turn towards these devices to help their child learn to articulate properly. But, these items are not scientifically proven as effective speech therapy tools. Sure they may be inexpensive and easy to find, but they are not meant to help your child overcome his speech disorder. Instead, **look for proven specific tools** that help teach a child correct tongue placement. This is where Speech Buddies can be an excellent option.

Speech Buddies provides a specific target so students can feel and hear exactly how to pronounce sounds. While we still recommend you visit your pediatrician or SLP first, these tools are effective treatment options to use at home or in conjunction with your speech therapist to help address speech disorders.

Hand-held tools: Speech Buddies help any type of articulation disorder. These tools teach the correct tongue

positioning for five of the most difficult sounds, R, S, L, CH and SH. Designed by a team of expert speech-language pathologists and engineers, the tools have been tested in numerous clinical studies and each time were found to fix speech problems quickly. The best part? They can be used at home, school, in conjunction with your speech therapist or in any setting.



TALK, READ AND SING TOGETHER EVERY DAY!

TIPS FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS & OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM PROVIDERS

A language rich environment is one in which children are surrounded by talking, singing, and reading and have many opportunities throughout their day, across all activities, to communicate with others and engage in back-and-forth conversations. A rich language environment is important to children's early learning, and can have strong effects on early language, vocabulary, reading, and math skills, as well as on children's social-emotional development.

Research shows that some young children are exposed to more language in their homes, early learning programs, and school settings, than other children. This difference in the number of words and back-and-forth conversations to which children are exposed is called the "word gap".

Below are some tips that you can use to help bridge the word gap by enriching the language environment of all young children in your care, including children who do not speak yet, children with disabilities or delays, and children who are learning more than one language. Partner with families and encourage them to try these strategies at home, in their home language. For children with disabilities or delays, communicate with their other service providers and keep each other informed about the strategies you are using to enhance their language environment.



ENGAGING CHILDREN IN CONVERSATIONS

Teachers and families play a critical role in developing language-rich learning environments. Try these strategies to engage all children in rich conversations in English or in their home language.

- Get down on the child's level.
- Tune in and listen to what the child says. If the child does not speak yet, tune into what they are doing or pointing to and use these moments to talk with them.
- Take turns talking. If the child doesn't have language yet, that may mean you are talking and the child is communicating in nonverbal ways, such as through gestures, looks, smiles, babbles, and word approximations (children's attempts at words).
- Talk about what the child is doing, what the child is looking at, or what the child is interested in.
- Ask questions that relate to the child's experiences or interests.
- Add words or questions to what the child says or does and model new language.
- Give the child enough time to respond. For children who do not have language yet, this may be a nonverbal response, like a gesture or a look.
- Stay tuned in to the child's facial and body expressions to make sure they are engaged.

FACILITATING “THICK” CONVERSATIONS

Children benefit from “thick” conversations. Thick conversations are characterized by giving children many chances to speak and communicate, asking open-ended questions, encouraging them to think and imagine, and having many back-and-forth exchanges. Here are four key strategies to engage children in thick conversations in English or in their home language:

1. ENCOURAGE BACK-AND-FORTH EXCHANGES.

- Tune into children’s interests and experiences and talk about them.
- Take turns communicating.
- Show that you are interested in what they are doing and listening to what they say.
- Provide time for children to respond.

3. INVITE CHILDREN TO TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

- Comment on what children are doing.
- Ask children questions about what they are doing, what they did before, and what they plan to do next.
- Encourage children to make comparisons and consider other possibilities.

2. EXTEND CHILDREN’S LANGUAGE.

- Expand on children’s words or their attempts at words by adding a little more. For example, if the child says “ball”, you can say “the blue ball is bouncing!”
- Add new vocabulary words to the ones children are already using when talking to them.
- Restate children’s language using correct grammar.

4. ENCOURAGE HIGHER-LEVEL THINKING.

- Help children make connections between what is happening in the classroom and what is happening in their home or community.
- Explain your thinking process.
- Introduce new concepts or ideas.

HERE’S ONE WAY TO TURN A THIN CONVERSATION...

Adult: Do you want to play with the boat?

Child: Yes.

Adult: What color is it?

Child: Blue.

Adult: Who will ride in the boat?

Child: The man.



→ INTO A THICK CONVERSATION.

Adult: Which toy do you like to play with the most?

Child: The boat.

Adult: Oh, the boat is your favorite. What will you do with the boat?

Child: The man is going to ride on it.

Adult: Where is the man traveling?

Child: Into the bubbles.

Adult: The bubbles are dense. Watch out!

Child: Help! The man is falling out!

Adult: Oh no! Who will rescue the man?

Child: I’ll get the whale!

Adult: The whale is the hero!

ASKING QUESTIONS

Asking stimulating and developmentally appropriate questions can help boost the language environment. Below are four strategies for extending conversations with questions.

ASK CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

- What are you working on today?
- You are working very hard, tell me about your project.
- What are your plans for those materials?

ASK CHILDREN TO MAKE PREDICTIONS.

- What do you think will happen next?
- What else could we use this container for?
- What would you do if that were you?

ASK CHILDREN TO PROVIDE EXPLANATIONS.

- Why do you think that happened?
- How can I help you solve this problem?
- How did you do that?

ASK CHILDREN TO CONNECT LEARNING TO THEIR OWN LIVES.

- What does this remind you of?
- These blocks are blue – what blue objects do you have in your home?
- The boy in the story loved his pet hamster. Do you have any pets? Tell me about them.

For children with limited language, giving them a choice can help them respond more easily to questions.

For example, “did you use crayons or markers to draw that picture?”

Keep high expectations for all children and gradually increase the complexity of your questions as children progress in their development.

EXPAND ON CHILDREN’S WORDS

Expanding on children’s language, nonverbally, in English or in their home language, is a meaningful way to extend conversations with children. Here are some key ways you can extend a conversation by expanding on what children say or communicate.

EXPAND ON CHILDREN’S WORDS TO SCAFFOLD LANGUAGE AND GIVE THEM MORE INFORMATION.

- Expand phrases so they are complete.
- Make phrases more complex.
- Add novel and interesting words.
- Summarize their thoughts.
- Relate to their lives and prior knowledge or experiences.
- Explain your thinking.
- Connect new and familiar concepts.

REPEAT WHAT THE CHILD SAYS, AND ADD A LITTLE MORE. YOU CAN ADD WORDS THAT:

Describe:

Child: I saw Ana’s dog.

Adult: Oh, you saw Ana’s fluffy little dog?

Name:

Child: I like that.

Adult: I like that red shiny whistle too!

Provide more information:

Child: Yay! David is coming!

Adult: Yes, I heard your Uncle David is going to visit in August and you’ll go to the beach!

USING NOVEL AND INTERESTING WORDS

One way to extend conversations with children is by incorporating novel words into everyday talk. Novel words are new and rich vocabulary words that build children's language. For example, you can use the word "enormous" instead of "big". Children can learn big, new, and interesting words through repeated exposures and concrete explorations of what they mean. Teachers and families can use novel words with children in English or in their home language. Incorporating novel words takes planning. Here are some strategies to get you started:

- Identify novel words by brainstorming with colleagues, searching children's books, poems, and songs, and using a thesaurus to find alternative ways to say the same word.
- Select materials that expand children's vocabulary, such as toy vehicle sets (e.g. ambulance, helicopter), people figurines (e.g. astronauts, pediatricians), and everyday materials in dramatic play (e.g. colander, stethoscope).
- Create child-friendly definitions for novel words in advance. Make sure they are simple, focus on qualities or characteristics, and are made up of familiar words.
- Take time to clearly explain what novel words mean and how they are used.
- Make novel words "real" and interesting using photos, objects, and activities. This is especially important for children with disabilities or developmental delays.
- Model using novel words and provide frequent opportunities for children to practice using them
- Use novel words in spontaneous conversations.
- Use novel words and other rich vocabulary words in responses to children.
- Keep track of the words a child knows and add novel words that build on familiar concepts.
- Read books and sing songs that contain novel words. Talk about what they mean.
- Expose children to novel words and have conversations with children during any activity during the day like meal time, transitions, circle time, story time, and dramatic play.
- Let families know about new words children are learning and encourage them to use novel words in their home language.
- If you have children who receive speech therapy or related services, share these words with the therapist who can support their use as well.



USE THE WORD
"ENORMOUS"
INSTEAD OF "BIG"

INTERACTIVE AND DIALOGIC READING

Dialogic reading is an interactive way of talking with young children about a book. The goal of this strategy is to engage a child in a dialogue and keep it going so the child has the opportunity to learn new concepts and words, practice using words, and form longer phrases and sentences. It can help with vocabulary and language development for all children and especially for those children learning to speak more than one language. For children learning more than one language, it is important that you read to them often, in their home language and in English.

An easy way to remember basic dialogic strategies is to “**Follow the CAR.**” **Follow the CAR** stands for:

- **F**ollow the child’s lead
- **C**omment and Wait
- **A**sk questions and Wait
- **R**espond by adding a little more and Wait

STEPS IN DIALOGIC READING:

1. Show the book and ask children to make predictions about the story.
2. Point out key words or ideas to help get the children ready for the story.
3. Read the book from beginning to end and use as much expression and gesture as you can.
4. Ask children to play an active part by making predictions along the way, answering questions, and pointing to or making comments about pictures, letters, and words.
5. The next time you read the book, and each time after that, let the children tell more and more of the story. Notice new words, interesting ideas, and silly actions and talk about them.
6. Ask “thinking questions”. One easy way to remember how to ask thinking questions is called CROWD. That stands for:
 - Completion questions (ask children to fill in the blank)
 - Recall questions (ask children if they remember something about the story)
 - Open-ended questions (encourage more than one word answers)
 - WH- questions (ask children who, what, where, when, how and why)
 - Distancing questions (ask children to make connections between the story and their own personal experiences)



STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN LEARNING MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE

Many children enter early learning settings learning more than one language. The tips in this document are appropriate for all children, but below are a few tips specific to enriching the language environment of young dual or multi-language learners.

Use multimedia and concrete objects to create connections between both languages. For example, show a toy seahorse or a picture of one if you're talking about a seahorse.

Use gestures and body language when communicating in the less familiar language. Children learn from facial expressions.

Speak slowly and clearly. Children need time to hear and process the meaning and context of what is being said.

Anticipate new words and give clear meanings. Use a lot of context, building on objects in the environment, routines, and what the children are experiencing at the moment.

Support interactive play with peers. Children gain a lot of their language through interaction with their peers. Praise children's responses so that you motivate children to continue learning their new language.

Encourage adults who speak children's native language, including families, to volunteer in the classroom and interact with children in their home language throughout the day.

You can find more tips like these—as well as videos, information, and more—on Too Small to Fail's website, www.talkingisteaching.org.

Track your child's development using the [Milestones Moments Booklet](#). If you have concerns about a child's development, including their language development, talk to the child's family about it. Ask them if they have concerns and if they observe the same issues at home. With their permission, conduct a developmental and behavioral screening and encourage them to talk to their primary care provider. For more information on developmental and behavioral screening, visit [Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!](#)

For more information on early learning, please visit [Head Start's National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning](#) and the [Early Head Start National Resource Center](#). For more information on working with young children who are learning more than one language, please visit [Head Start's National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness](#).

For more information on enhancing the language environment for children with developmental disabilities or delays, please visit the [Center for Early Literacy Learning](#).

