

### Contact

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If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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## Early Years Speech and Language Therapy

### Speech Sound Development



### Information for parents/carers and professionals



## Speech development

When learning to say words children can be difficult to understand at first because of the 'mistakes' in their pronunciation - these 'mistakes' are very common.



It's a tat

Younger children often change some of the sounds so the words are easier to say. Some of the most common sound changes are:

**Fronting:** using a sound made at the front of the mouth (p/b/t/d) instead of one made at the back (k/g), eg saying 'key' as "tea" or 'dog' as "dod". This usually resolves by around age four.

**Stopping:** using a short sound (eg p/b/d) instead of a long sound (eg s/sh/f), eg saying 'finger' as "pinger" or 'sun' as "tun". This usually resolves between 3½-5.

**Weak syllable deletion:** making a longer word shorter, eg saying 'banana' as "nana". Children often do this until age four.

**Lisping:** saying s/z as /th/, eg saying 'sun' as "thun". This is quite common up until

around age 4½.

**Cluster reduction:** missing out one sound where there are two consonants together, eg saying 'spider' as "pider" or 'glove' as "guv". This can happen until around age five years old, depending on the sound.

**Gliding:** substituting r/l/w/y, eg saying 'yellow' as "lello" or 'red' as "wed". Glides are some of the last sounds to develop, often by six.

### A rough guide to speech clarity:

Age	Percentage that familiar adults can understand
18 months	25%
2 years	50-75%
3 years	75-100%
4 years	100% (although some speech sounds errors will still occur)

Typically children's speech steadily improves, so by the time they are four years old they are clear and understood by everyone (although there may still be some sounds they find difficult to say).

### What if I don't understand?

- It can be tricky if you don't understand everything the child says to you. It's important for the child that you show them you're still interested in what

they have to say

- Try to guess what the child is talking about using clues from what has happened recently, e.g. "Are you talking about the park?"
- Ask the child to try and show you what s/he is talking about, e.g. "Can you show me?"
- Don't be afraid to say sensitively that you can't understand, e.g. "Sorry Billy, I didn't understand that word, can you tell me again"

### Supporting children's speech sound development

- **Be face-to-face** when talking together so that s/he can see the way your mouth makes the sounds.
- **Repeat back** the child's words using the correct sounds, e.g. Child: "a tat!" Adult: "oh yes, it's a cat!"
- **Play listening games**, e.g. go for walks and talk about the noises you hear, hide a noisy toy (e.g. a small radio or egg timer) and see if the child can find it.
- **Play around with sounds**, make animal noises, make silly sounds/lip shapes, make sounds while you play, eg brm, choo choo, nee-naw, woof

**Avoid asking the child to repeat words back to you - if they could say the words clearly they would!**