

Early Sound Play

Some children find it tricky to learn and use speech sounds correctly. The activities in this leaflet are designed to encourage your child to notice and listen to different speech sounds, while also providing fun ways for you and your child to explore new sounds together.

Tips for sound play:

- Repeat each sound multiple times
- Focus on demonstrating the sound yourself rather than expecting your child to copy
- Say the sound itself, not the letter name (for example, 'sss' rather than 'suh')
- Make sure your child can see your lips and tongue making the speech sounds
- Talk about using your lips and tongue when making the sounds
- Make the activities fun!

Responding to your child:

Your child may attempt the sounds when they feel ready, but they should never be pressured to do so. Forcing attempts can create frustration and make future speech practice harder.

- If your child tries and produces the sound correctly, praise them and point out what they did well (e.g., "Great job, I saw your tongue make that sound!")
- If they try but the sound is incorrect, don't correct them. Instead, encourage them to continue listening to you demonstrating the sound (e.g., "Keep listening—hear the dripping tap go t-t-t?")

Activity ideas for specific sounds:

/p/

- Blow bubbles and as you pop them whisper 'p-p-p'.
- During bath time, place bubbles on your hand and blow them away using the 'p' sound.
- Whisper the 'p' sound onto your child's hand, tummy, or face so they can feel the air and watch your lips.
- Steam up a mirror by softly whispering 'p'.
- Model short words through play; e.g. "up", "pop", "stop".



/b/

- Bounce a ball while saying 'b-b-b'—you can bounce it into a **box**, a **bag**, or **back** and forth with your child.
- Inflate a **balloon** and gently **bat** it to each other, saying 'b' as it moves through the air.
- Make the 'b-b-b' sound while jumping on a trampoline.
- Model short words through play; "boo", "bye", "baa".



/m/

- Have a tea party and say 'mmm' while enjoying something tasty.
- Move toy cars along and make the 'mmm' sound as you "drive" them.
- When eating or feeding toys say 'mmm', 'yummy'.
- March around the room or garden saying 'm-m-m' as if you're in a parade.
- Model short words through play; "more", "moo", "me".

/t/

- At bath time, watch the cold tap drip and whisper 't-t-t' as it drips.
- Drip water onto your child's hand and whisper 't-t-t' as it falls.
- Pretend to make tea with water in a toy teapot or bottle, saying 't-t-t' as it drips into the cup.
- Play "washing toys" with a water bottle and whisper 't-t-t' with each drip.
- Watch a clock or watch tick and copy the sound by whispering 't-t-t'.
- Tap a tambourine or similar instrument and say 't-t-t' as you tap.
- Model short words through play; "toe", "two", "out".



/d/

- Play a drum, pan, or wooden spoon and say ‘**d-d-d**’ each time you hit it.
- Make a drum from an empty ice-cream tub and play along, saying ‘**d-d-d**’ for your child to hear.
- Pretend to be a giant and make the ‘**d-d-d**’ sound while stamping your feet.
- Use a toy hammer to tap objects while saying ‘**d-d-d**’.
- Model short words through play; “do”, “door”, “down”.



/k/

- Pretend to take photos using a toy camera or an old disposable camera, whispering ‘**k-k-k**’ as you “click” each picture.
- Play castanets and whisper the ‘**k**’ sound as you click the m.
- Slowly pull apart a strip of Velcro while whispering ‘**k-k-k**’.
- Use toy food with Velcro and whisper ‘**k-k-k**’ as you “cut” it with a toy knife.
- Model short words through play; “car”, “key”, “cow”.

/g/

- During bath time or water play, say ‘**g-g-g**’ as water goes down the plug hole.
- Pretend to drink from an empty drinks bottle while saying ‘**g-g-g**’.
- Model short words through play; “go”, “gone”, “get”.



/s/

- Use a toy snake and make a long ‘**sss**’ sound.
- Create a snake sock puppet and say ‘**sss**’ while playing with it alongside your child.
- Pretend to feed a toy snake, making the ‘**sss**’ sound as it “eats.”
- Thread beads, pasta tubes, or similar items, saying a long ‘**sss**’ sound as you go.
- Model short words through play; “see”, “sit”.

/f/

- Blow up a balloon and slowly release the air while making a long ‘**fff**’ sound.
- Whisper a long ‘**fff**’ sound onto your child’s hand, tummy, or face so they can feel the air and watch your mouth.

- Blow a feather or piece of tissue off your hand while saying 'fff'.
- Pretend a toy rocket is taking off (or make one from a toilet roll tube) and say 'fff' as it "launches."
- Play with pretend food and blow on it to "cool it down," making the 'f' sound
- Model short words through play; "off".



/sh/

- Put your child's teddies to bed, saying 'sh' as you say goodnight.
- Rock a toy doll or soft toy to sleep, using the 'sh' sound as you cuddle it.
- Pour water from a toy teapot or bottle while making the 'sh' sound.
- Listen for leaves rustling outside and copy the sound by saying 'sh'.
- Use a water spray and say 'sh' as you spray it
- Model short words through play; "splash", "shoe" "share"

For further examples, please watch the following You Tube video 'Exploring Speech Sounds' by 'Great Western Hospital NHS':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNQN4sWaUsl&t=9s>

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