

# Learning speech through sounds



*Learning how to say sounds is a complex skill, which some children pick up on their own. Many other children need to be taught how to make sounds. These children should be given lots of opportunities to practise sounds in order to use them correctly in words and sentences. Children begin to play with sounds from a very young age. They love to make noises, watch your reaction and try to copy you. Try these activities to help your child listen and learn sounds, increase their confidence and willingness to participate, and reduce the frustration of not being understood.*

## Here are some ways you can help your child learn speech through sounds:

### Have fun playing and being silly with sounds:

Blow raspberries, click your tongue, smack your lips.

### Copy any babbling noises your child is making:

For example, "ah-ah-ah". Wait to see if they make the sound again after you, and take a few turns. You can try to add new sounds like "bah bah bah", "dah dah dah", "mah mah mah".

### Play with pitch and volume:

Lift your child in the air, saying "up up up" and make your voice higher. Play hide and seek with a toy, making quiet noises while the toy is hidden with a louder "boo" or "here it is" when you move the toy out.

### Make lots of sounds when you are playing:

Animals, trains, planes and cars all make noises, so replicate those when you're playing. If you notice your child paying attention to a sound such as the phone ringing or a siren, copy the sound and encourage them to try it as well.

### Children will often learn to say B, P, M, T and D first:

You can collect objects or pictures starting with these sounds and practise them. Have your child watch your

mouth as you say the word and ask them to copy you. Praise any attempts and don't worry if they can't say it yet – try again another time.

### Play with sounds in front of a mirror:

Kids love to watch themselves, so encourage them to watch themselves trying new sounds. They can start to take notice of the different ways their lips and tongue move.

### If your child is struggling with sounds, try to:

- Make that sound louder or longer when you say it. This will help your child notice it and repeat it. For example, "mmmmmy drink".
- Repeat the word they tried to say the correct way. Do not repeat or encourage their incorrect pronunciations.
- Choose activities your child enjoys. Continue each activity for as long as they are willing to participate. Help your child learn that listening and talking can be fun. It is very important that your child does not begin to associate speech and talking with feeling bad or frustrated.



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