



Top Tips to Develop Speech Sound Awareness Skills

Speech sound awareness skills are also known as 'phonological awareness skills'. If your child is finding some sounds in words tricky to say, the following activities will help them to become more aware of the sounds in words. This in turn will help them to say words more clearly.

Songs, rhythm and rhyme

- 🎵 Singing nursery and action rhymes with your child is a fun and really important way of supporting their speech and language development. There are many books and videos available. Try to sing the same songs on a daily basis so that your child gets to know the tune and words. Sing in the bath, in the car, walking down the road etc. It's also fun to accompany the song with a shaker/tambourine/drum or clapping. If you don't have these you can use a saucepan and wooden spoon or beads in a jar etc.
- 🎵 Dance, sway, clap, stamp your feet and skip alongside the music. Encourage your child to join in with you. Music with a strong beat is best.
- 🎵 When your child is familiar with a nursery rhyme, miss out the end rhyming word or say the wrong word e.g. 'Humpty dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great!' or 'Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great **ball**.' See if your child can fill in the missing word or correct the mistake.
- 🎵 Read short poems and picture books that have a rhyming story to your child. Read the same ones again and again so they get to know them and can start joining in the story with you.
- 🎵 Make up silly rhyming names to match your child's name, or use a pair of puppets e.g. Kim, Sim, Bim or Riley, Miley, Smiley etc. Encourage your child to make up rhyming strings. They do not need to make real words e.g. sanana, banana, boggy, doggy etc.

Listening games - using non speech sounds

- ⚙️ **Guess the instrument** - choose two sets of matching noisemakers/instruments. These may include shakers, bells, drums made of saucepans and wooden spoons etc. Let your child play with the instruments and listen to the sounds they make. Describe the sounds; are they loud or quiet? Hide one set of the instruments behind a screen (e.g. a box or a large book) and place a matching set in front of

your child. Play one of the instruments behind the screen and see if your child can show you which one you played. Play two instruments one after the other - either the same instrument or two different ones. Can your child tell you if the instruments were the same or different? Gradually increase the number of instruments to choose from, and see if your child can remember a sequence of two or three sounds.

- 🌀 **Hunt the music box** - hide a music box or musical toy somewhere in the room while your child waits outside the room. Ask them to find the toy by locating the sound.

- 🌀 **Other game ideas** - play games that encourage good waiting, turn taking and listening. These could include the following:
 - Play 'ready steady go' with wind up cars, marble runs or pop up toys.
 - Copy beats on a drum.
 - Match sounds to pictures e.g. animal noises. Sound lotto sets and apps are commercially available.
 - Play musical statues, musical islands/chairs etc.
 - Listen to environmental sounds e.g. washing machine, Hoover, and car. Can your child match the sound to the object?

Syllable Clapping (for children aged over 3 and a half years)

🦋 Syllables are like beats in a word

Cat has 1 syllable

El bow has 2 syllables

Di no saur has 3 syllables

Cat er pi llar has 4 syllables

- 🦋 Collect a range of toys/objects and/or people's names. To start with, just focus on one length of word (e.g. 2 syllable words). As your child becomes more confident, you could practise e.g. 2-syllable *and* 4-syllable words within the same activity.
- 🦋 Look at one object/picture at a time and clap the syllables as you say the word. It may help to break the spoken word down slightly, so that your child can hear you saying the syllables (e.g. say 'di-no-saur', rather than 'dinosaur').

- 🦋 Using objects to represent the number of claps can really help a child to work out how many claps a word has, for example 'e-le-phant' - lay out 3 blocks and tap each block as you say the syllable.
- 🦋 Encourage your child to join in with you, so that they clap the syllables too (it may help to hold hands and clap together at first). When your child gets the hang of this you could see if they can clap the syllables on their own, whilst you say the word for them.
- 🦋 You could then move on to encouraging your child to select an object by the number of claps you do. For example if you do two claps they would need to choose a toy/object with two claps (e.g. bubbles, teddy etc.).

Listening to the sounds at the beginning of words (for children aged over 3 and a half years)

- 🦋 Sound hunts are a great way of exploring the sounds within words. Collect objects and pictures of words that start with the same sound e.g. 's' - sun, sock, sand or 'b' - ball, boot, book. Focus on the **sound** rather than the written letter e.g. 'circle' starts with the sound 's' but the written letter 'c'; shoe and soap start with different sounds but car and key both start with the same sound.
- 🦋 Put the objects into a box and then spend time exploring the objects one at a time. Say the words lots of times during this activity, slightly exaggerating the first sound to draw attention to it. Look around for more objects/pictures that start with that sound. Try giving your child a choice, for example if you are looking for things that start with 'm' you could say "Oh look, a mouse and a dog, I wonder which one starts with **m**?"
- 🦋 You could create a scrapbook together, with each page showing things beginning with a different sound. For example, for the 'b' page, your child could cut and stick pictures out of magazines which start with 'b', draw pictures of things which start with 'b', or stick in photos they have taken of things which start with 'b'. At this stage they are likely to need lots of help to work out which pictures/items start with each sound.
- 🦋 There is no pressure on your child to say the sounds at this stage; it is just useful for them to hear you using them!