



SpeechWise

Speech sound difficulties: **Classroom strategies**

Top tips when interacting with a child with speech difficulties:

Positioning

- Make sure you are positioned for good speech sound modelling by sitting the child with speech difficulties at the front of the classroom where they can hear you clearly and see your mouth
- Get down to the child level and encourage the child to look at you when you are talking to them directly.



Be aware of how you are talking

- Slow down your speech, so they can process your sounds & words.
- Model the sound rather than correcting them. Repeat incorrect sounds/words back, with slight emphasis on the sound they said wrong. The focus should be on them listening to you saying the sound (imagine how exhausting it would be if someone asked you to repeat a sound you find difficult every time you get it wrong!!)
- Talk naturally so you don't distort the target sound or over-emphasise it too much.

Build their confidence

- When the child speaks, confirm what you DO understand and praise them for what they have said, rather than how they said it.
- Set up conversation opportunities on the child's topic of interest. Have books, pictures in front of you to help with the context of what they are saying. Use a home/school diary to find out what they have done at home that you could talk about.

Don't pretend to understand

- Instead ask them to show you what they mean using other ways of communicating, e.g. pointing, bringing you, drawing. This shows you value **what** they are saying.
- If necessary, see if someone else can help to understand what they are saying? For example, saying 'Oh I don't quite understand what you mean. Let's ask Mummy when she gets here as she will understand'



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Top tips for working on speech sound difficulties:

Get to know speech sounds!

- Get to know a little about each speech sound – simply make the yourself, whilst looking in the mirror to see what it looks like and like. **Just have a go!**
- E.g. Is your mouth open or closed? Can you see your tongue? Is it sticking out?
- By comparing your accurate articulation with a child's error, you can help them to understand more about how the sound should be articulated.



Use Phonics sessions to focus on speech sounds

- Focus on a particular sound for a child or group of children.
- Praise any attempts they make. If they aren't accurate, you can always say "That was a really good try" and continue to model the sound for them.
- If they can't attempt the sound, maybe they can still listen for a sound and find an object starting with that sound.

Build the child's language

- Children with speech sound difficulties often have delayed language too. So it's good to build their vocabulary and ability to speak in sentences. Focusing on language won't stop their speech sounds developing so don't worry about not directly working on their speech.

Make speech practice fun!

- Play games like 'I spy...', finding all the things that start with the target sound or pop up pirate
- Use puppets and a mirror to demonstrate where and how the sound is made: at the front or back of the mouth, with an open or closed mouth



Develop their phonological awareness

- Do engaging activities to build syllables, rhyme and sound awareness.

Work with families

- If appropriate, give advice on removing dummies and getting a hearing test
- Short bursts of daily practice will see the best improvement so send sound and wordlists home for parents to practice