

## Speech Sounds

Your child's speech sounds develop as your child grows and listens to your voice. A baby's early vocalizations are crude but effectively motivating because they receive the reward of your attention. Your child continues to develop the muscles needed for speech through crying, cooing, blowing bubbles, sucking and eating. By 6 months of age, your child begins to combine consonants and vowels into strings of babbled sounds. Soon, your child adds the rising intonation of questions and the falling intonation of statements to these strings of babbled sounds. Meaningful, single word approximations develop between 12 - 18 months of age. With encouragement, your child will continue to speak and refine speech sounds through age 8. Children develop speech sounds in a predictable order due to maturing speech musculature and ability to discriminate one sound from another.

*Watch for the following sounds to develop between 3 - 8 years of age:*

- By age 3.5: p, b, m, h, w, y (yes), d, and n
- By ages 4: t, k, g (gum), f,
- By age 5: ng (swing), and dg (jars)
- By age 6: v, l, sh, and ch
- By age 7: s, z, and sound blends (spoon, block, train)
- By age 8: r, and th

*How can I help my child development clear speech?*

1. Speak with your child often.
2. Expect your child to use word attempts when your child wants something. Once your child is attempting single words, do not respond to "aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa" and pointing. Name the item your child wants and expect your child to make an attempt to repeat what you said.
3. Give your child time to respond.
4. Re-say what your child attempts to say using slight emphasis on errored words. For example, if your child says, "Goggy back", re-say, "Yes, the doggy is black."
5. Make sure that your child does not suffer from repeated ear infections that temporarily reduce your child's hearing acuity and slow your child's speech development.
6. Encourage your child to slow their rate of speaking by slowing your own rate of speaking.

*What should I do if I'm not sure if my child is developing speech sounds as expected?*

If your child is at least 3 years of age, contact your local school and ask to speak with the speech and language therapist for further information.