



NEWCASTLE

Speech
Pathology



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CLEARER SPEECH

*10 Things You Must Do and
3 Mistakes to Avoid*

+ 3 Bonus Tips

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HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND HELP THEM BE UNDERSTOOD

Do you want your child to be easily understood by others? Are you ready to enhance your child's speech clarity without feeling overwhelmed?

We understand the frustration when your child struggles to communicate clearly. It can affect their confidence and social interactions, making everyday conversations challenging.

You're not alone – many parents face this issue. In fact, research shows that speech and language difficulties affect up to 20% of young children, impacting their development and learning.

SHOULD I BE WORRIED IF MY CHILD ISN'T SPEAKING CLEARLY?

As a rule of thumb, 3 year olds should be understood by unfamiliar people around 75% of the time. 4 to 5 year olds should be 100% intelligible in conversation, even if they have a few errors in speech, these should not make them overly difficult to understand.

If your child is not meeting their speech development milestones it's time to take action!

THE IMPACT OF UNCLEAR SPEECH

When a child has unclear speech, it can lead to several negative consequences:

- **Social Isolation:** Children who are not understood by their peers may feel isolated and struggle to form friendships.
- **Academic Challenges:** Clear communication is essential for learning. Speech difficulties can impact reading, writing, and overall academic performance.
- **Emotional Impact:** Persistent communication issues can lead to frustration, low self-esteem, and anxiety.
- **Behavioural Issues:** Frustration from not being understood can result in negative behaviours as the child attempts to express themselves.

Addressing speech clarity is crucial for your child's overall development and well-being.

But there's good news! This guide offers fun and effective strategies to help your child improve their speech clarity. With these tips, you'll see progress and feel empowered to support your child's communication journey. Keep reading to discover how you can make a significant difference!



10 TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP CLEARER SPEECH

1. GET FACE-TO-FACE

- **Why:** Getting face-to-face with your child is a fantastic way to model speech and help them learn. Seeing your face helps your child focus and understand how to form words.
- **How:** Ensure your child can see your mouth when you speak. This might mean getting down on the floor, putting your child in your lap, or sitting them in a high chair at the table with you.
- **Example:** During meal times or play sessions, sit down with them and have a conversation. Exaggerate your mouth movements slightly as you pronounce words. This way, your child can see how your lips, tongue, and teeth move, helping them to mimic these actions and improve their own speech.

2. PLAY LOOK, LISTEN, COPY GAMES

- **Why:** Engage in multisensory learning by playing look, listen, and copy games. This activity not only makes learning fun but also allows your child to see, hear, and feel their own mouth movements, reinforcing their speech development. For example, pretend to be a lion and roar together, then switch to a snake and hiss. These activities help your child associate sounds with movements and expressions.

- **How:** Get in front of a mirror with your child and play a mimic game. Make funny faces, copy tongue tricks, and make animal noises. Encourage your child to see, hear, and feel their own mouth movements. Say, "Let's roar like a lion! Roar!" and ask them to copy you.

3. TEACH NEW WORDS

- **Why:** Exposure to new words helps your child practise and learn them.
- **How:** Use books, games, and activities that feature the sounds your child finds difficult. Encourage them to watch and listen as you say these words.
- **Example:** Introduce a new word by breaking it into syllables. For example, if teaching the word "caterpillar," say, "Cat-er-pil-lar." Explain what it means by showing a picture and relating it to your child's experiences, like "Remember the caterpillar we saw in the garden?"

4. BREAK WORDS INTO SYLLABLES

- **Why:** Understanding syllable structure helps with clear pronunciation.
- **How:** Use physical activities to make learning syllables fun.
- **Example:** While bouncing on a trampoline or stomping like dinosaurs, break words into syllables. Say, "Let's say 'banana' – ba-na-na!" and bounce or stomp for each syllable. This physical activity reinforces the structure and rhythm of the word.

5. RECAST

- **Why:** Hearing the correct version helps your child learn.
- **How:** If your child makes a mistake, repeat what they said correctly in a positive tone. Repeat it a few times naturally.
- **Example:** If your child says, "I see a tar," respond with, "Yes, I see the car too! The car is blue. It's a fast car." This reinforces the correct pronunciation without making your child feel corrected.

6. PLAY SOUND GAMES

- **Why:** Increasing awareness of sounds in words helps improve speech clarity.
- **How:** Break words into syllables and sounds, think of rhyming words, and play I Spy or go on a treasure hunt for items beginning or ending with certain sounds.
- **Example:** Play a sound scavenger hunt. Hide objects around the house that start with different sounds and have your child find and name them. For example, "Let's find something that starts with 'b' – ball!"



7. SING SONGS AND RHYMES

- **Why:** Songs and rhymes make learning sounds fun and memorable.
- **How:** Sing songs that emphasise different sounds and rhythms, like nursery rhymes or child-friendly raps.
- **Example:** Have a karaoke session at home where your child can sing along to their favorite songs. Use rhymes and raps to practise tricky sounds. Create your own silly raps about daily activities to make the learning process entertaining.

8. FOCUS ON SENTENCES

- **Why:** Correct grammar helps make speech clearer.
- **How:** Model correct sentence structures and gently correct mistakes.
- **Example:** Use storybooks with repetitive lines and clear sentence structures. Encourage your child to repeat sentences after you. For example, read a book like "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" and ask your child to join in on the repeated phrases.



9. BE REALISTIC

- **Why:** Knowing what to expect helps you support your child's development appropriately.
- **How:** Understand the typical ages when children develop certain sounds. Children learn new sounds in stages, so be patient.
- **Example:** Some sounds, like 'r' and 'th', are acquired later. Don't pressure your child to master these sounds prematurely. Create a sound chart to track your child's progress. Celebrate when they master a new sound. Acknowledge their efforts with a sticker or a small reward.

10. READ TOGETHER

- **Why:** Reading together helps link sounds and letters and identify sounds in words.
- **How:** Point to the words as you read. This helps your child understand the connection between spoken and written language.
- **Example:** Choose books with repetitive phrases and sounds. Take turns reading with your child, and encourage them to repeat after you or finish sentences in familiar books. For example, read "Mr McGee and the Blackberry Jam" by Pamela Allan and emphasise the rhyming words.



3 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID FOR BETTER SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

1. TESTING YOUR CHILD

- **Why It's a Problem:** Constantly testing your child can create pressure and anxiety, making them less likely to enjoy speaking and practising new words.
- **Example of What to Avoid:** Instead of saying, "It's not 'tar,' it's 'car.'" Can you say 'car'?" avoid turning corrections into tests.
- **Try This Instead:** Use gentle recasting. For example, if your child says, "I see a tar," you can respond, "Yes, I see the car too! The car is driving fast." This way, you model the correct pronunciation without making your child feel tested.

2. NEGATIVE REACTIONS TO SPEECH ERRORS

- **Why It's a Problem:** Negative reactions, such as showing frustration or correcting harshly, can discourage your child and lower their confidence.
- **Example of What to Avoid:** Avoid saying things like, "No, that's wrong. Say it properly!" This can make your child feel inadequate and hesitant to try speaking.



- **Try This Instead:** Maintain a positive and encouraging tone. Celebrate their efforts with specific praise. For example, "I love how you tried to say 'elephant'! Let's try it together again."

3. IGNORING UNCLEAR SPEECH AND TAKING A 'WAIT AND SEE' APPROACH

- **Why It's a Problem:** Ignoring speech issues can delay necessary interventions and support, potentially leading to more significant difficulties down the road.
- **Example of What to Avoid:** Avoid thinking, "They'll grow out of it," or not addressing persistent speech problems.
- **What to Do Instead:** Pay attention to your child's speech development. If you notice ongoing difficulties, consult a speech pathologist for a professional assessment and advice on how to support your child's speech development effectively.

Helping your child develop clearer speech doesn't have to be stressful. By implementing these tips and strategies and avoiding common pitfalls, you can create a supportive environment that fosters effective communication. Remember, your involvement and encouragement play a crucial role in your child's speech development. Keep practising, stay positive, and watch your child's confidence and clarity grow!



Bonus



BONUS TIPS FOR PROMOTING CLEAR SPEECH

1. HAVE MORE CONVERSATIONS

- **Why:** More talking means more practice and learning opportunities for your child.
- **How:** Turn off screens and spend time talking about what your child is interested in. Engaging in conversations helps build vocabulary and reinforces correct speech patterns.
- **Example:** If your child loves dinosaurs, turn off the TV and have a conversation about their favourite dinosaurs. Ask them to describe what each dinosaur looks like and what they eat. You could say, "Tell me more about your favourite dinosaur, the T-Rex. What does it look like? What does it eat?"

2. MAKE COMMENTS RATHER THAN QUESTIONS

- **Why:** Comments can be more encouraging and less pressure-inducing than questions, making your child feel more comfortable and open to speaking.
- **How:** Aim for four comments to every one question. Comments provide models for speech without putting the child on the spot.
- **Example:** Instead of asking, "What is this?" when playing with a toy car, you could say, "This car is really fast! Look at how it zooms around the track. It has big, shiny wheels." Then, follow up with a question like, "Do you think the car can go even faster?"

Bonus



BONUS TIPS FOR PROMOTING CLEAR SPEECH

3. USE OTHER METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

- **Why:** Gestures, signs, and other non-verbal methods can support speech development and help your child communicate more effectively.
- **How:** Use gestures, sign language, and visual cues to support your child's understanding and expression. These methods can be particularly helpful for reinforcing new words and concepts.
- **Example:** Have a box of pictures representing your child's favourite, foods, activities, places and friends. When you're struggling to understand your child, encourage them to show you the picture of the topic they are talking about. Generally, when you understand the context, your child's speech will be easier to understand.

NEED HELP?

Contact Us!

If your child needs help developing these crucial communication skills, don't hesitate to reach out to us at Newcastle Speech Pathology. Our experienced team is here to support you and your little one on this journey.

Contact Newcastle Speech Pathology Today!



ABOUT US

At Newcastle Speech Pathology, we're on a mission to support parents to help their children unlock their full potential.

We're passionate about helping kids communicate clearly because we know that clear communication unlocks opportunities in life.

Whether it's in school, at work, or in the community, everyone deserves to be heard and understood.

We provide a full range of speech pathology services to our clients and their families. Based in Newcastle, New South Wales, we offer in-clinic and online appointments.

Contact us today to discuss your child's communication skills and find out how we can support you in unlocking their potential!

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