

Typical speech sound development

2–3 years

- Children are using the following sounds in their speech: p, b, m, n, w, t, d, h
- Other sounds may not be used at this point, and longer or more complicated words will often not yet be clear, even with the early sounds above.
- In general, speech is often difficult for unfamiliar listeners to understand.

3–4 years

- Children will have clearer speech, although they will still have some immaturities. They may not yet be saying more difficult sounds like 'sh', 'ch', 'l' & 'r', and clusters of 2 consonants e.g. st.
- Some children at this age will not yet be using sounds such as 'k', 'g', 's', 'z', 'f' and 'v', though they should develop during the year they are 3.
- People who know the child can mostly understand them.

4–5 years

- Children will have mostly clear speech, though will continue to have difficulties with a small number of sounds – for example 'sh' as in 'show', 'j' as in 'jam', 'l' – as in 'letter', 'r' – as in 'rabbit' and 'th' as in 'thumb'.
- Words with clusters of sounds such as 'st', 'sl', 'sp', 'cr', 'fl' will often be unclear at this point.
- If sounds such as 'k', 'g', 's', 'z', 'f' and 'v' are not in place, this is delayed for their age.

5–6 years

- Children use most speech sounds. However, they may not yet be able to say longer and more complex words clearly, such as 'scribble' or 'elephant'.
- Some speech sounds such as 'r', 'th', and clusters of sounds such as 'sl', 'pr', 'tw', 'sk', may not yet be developed.

6–7 years

Children produce speech that is clear and easy to understand, though may still have some immaturities:

- 'th' sounds – typically produced as 'f' and 'v', and 'r' sound – typically produced as 'w'
- Combinations of consonant sounds e.g. 'pider' (spider), 'fower' (flower), 'bikkit' (biscuit)
- Words with 3 or more syllables may be mixed up e.g. 'pasketti' for spaghetti, 'efalent' for elephant.

By age 7

- Use speech that is consistently clear and easy to understand.
- There may still be occasional errors with longer words, with words with 2-3 consonants together at the start (e.g. **scramble**, **stranger**), and with the 'r' and 'th' sounds.