Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Children and Young People's Services

NHS
East of England Community Health and Care
NHS Trust

What to expect as your child is developing speech sounds

For most children, speech sounds are developing up until around 7 years old.

By 3½ years	By 4½ years	By 5½ years	By 7 years
Sounds your child has: p, b, t, d, k, g m, n, ng, w, l, y f, v, s, z, h	**Your child also has:** zh (like in measure) ch, j	**Your child also has:** sh,	**Your child also has:** r th

**90% of children should be able to use these sounds on their own/as single sounds at these ages. They may continue to make errors in words for a while longer.*

You can expect your child to make mistakes as they are developing their speech sounds. Here are some we expect most children will be using at some point.

Until 2 years	Until 4 years
Final Consonant Deletion: when children leave sounds off the ends of words (e.g. bed='be').	**Weak Syllable Deletion:** when weak or unstressed syllables are left off of words (e.g. banana=nana, elephant=efant). **Fronting:** when back sounds are replaced with front sounds (e.g. key=tea). **Cluster Reduction (doubles):** when clusters or blends of 2 consonant sounds are said with only 1 sound (e.g. spoon=poon, train=chain, blue=boo). **remember 'ch', 'sh', and 'th' are said as a single sound.*

Until 3 years	Until 5-7 years
Voicing: when sounds that use our voice or don't use our voice are swapped (e.g. pig=big).	**Gliding (w, r, l, y sounds):** when the 'l' and 'r' sounds are replaced with 'w' and 'y' sounds (e.g. yellow=yeyow, rabbit=wabbit, frog=fwog). **(until 6yrs)** **Deaffrication:** when the 'ch' and 'j' sounds are replaced with a long sound like 'sh' or 'zh' (e.g. chips=ships, jump=dump). **(until 5yrs)** **Cluster Reduction (triples):** when clusters or blends of 3 consonant sounds are said with fewer sounds (e.g. splash=spash). **(until 5yrs)** **remember 'ch', 'sh', and 'th' are said as a single sound.*
Until 3½ years	
Stopping: when long sounds are replaced with short sounds (e.g. very=berry, zoo=do, feet=beet, sea=tea).	

***Please note that for children with learning difficulties, these stages of development may be different or delayed. We would look to see if their speech development is in line with their language and broader cognitive development.*

Less common things your child might do that aren't part of typical development

Backing: when front sounds are made as back sounds (e.g. tea=key, dog=gog,).	**Vowel Errors:** when one vowel sound is swapped for another vowel sound (e.g. cat=cart, boat=bot, party=putty).
Initial Consonant Deletion: when sounds at the beginning of words are left off (e.g. car=ar, bunny=unny, more=or).	Your child might also prefer using 1 sound to replace lots of sounds. We call this **phoneme collapse.** (e.g. 'I like the green dinosaur' might sound like 'I died duh deen dinodore')

**** If your child is using these, consider seeking advice from your local speech and language therapy team.*

Speech Sound Development Norms taken from Dodd et al (2003).