You may also read Part 1: Single Speech Sounds.

The first leaflet looks at the order children develop their ability to use single sounds. We explain what ages different sounds develop at.

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If your child is currently working with a speech and language therapist, your therapist may talk to you about how your child's speech development compares to the age-related expectations we have outlined here.

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Speech sound development norms have been taken from Dodd et al's 2003 study with British English-speaking children.

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If your child is not yet using sounds expected for their age, you can seek support. The speech and language therapy team can be contacted at the details below. Alternatively, speak to your health visitor or school SENCo about your concerns. For younger children of preschool-age, parents can self-refer by sending us a welcome questionnaire (the form can be found on our website).

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Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Children and Young People's Services

Children's Speech & Language Therapy
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust
Tel: 0300 029 5050
Website: www.slc.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk
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Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Children and Young People's Services

NHS
East of England Community Health and Care
NHS Trust

Parent Guide to Speech Sound Development:

Part 2 – Speech Sounds in Words



This leaflet will help you understand the speech sounds errors children may make as they are learning to talk and use speech sounds in words.

- What speech sound errors do children use at different ages?
- When should I seek support if I am worried about my child's speech?

What speech sound errors do children use at different ages?

Most children will make errors with speech sounds in words as they are developing their speech. Below we explain some errors you can expect to see in your child's speech and when we would expect them to naturally resolve.

Final Consonant Deletion – This is when children leave sounds off the ends of words e.g. 'boat' becomes 'bow'
This usually resolves around age 2

Voicing – This is when children make quiet sounds noisy e.g. 'p' becomes 'b'
This usually resolves around age 3

Stopping – This is when long sounds are made as short sounds e.g. 's' becomes 't'
This usually resolves around age 3½

Weak Syllable Deletion – This is when children leave off syllables in words e.g. 'elephant' becomes 'ephant'
Fronting – This is when sounds typically made at the back of mouth are made at the front e.g. 'k' becomes 't'
Cluster Reduction (doubles) – This is when children shorten groups of 2 consonant sounds e.g. 'blue' becomes 'boo'
These usually resolve around age 4.

Cluster Reduction (triples) – This is when children shorten groups of 3 consonant sounds e.g. 'splash' becomes 'bash'
Deaffrication – This is when children change 'ch' to 'sh' and 'j' to 'zh' e.g. 'chew' becomes 'shoe'
These usually resolve around age 5

Gliding – This is when the 'l' and 'r' sounds become 'y' and 'w' e.g. 'rain' becomes 'wain'
This usually resolves around age 6

What else might I see?

These are some errors that we see children make with speech sounds in words that aren't expected as part of typical development.

Backing - when sounds typically made at the front of the mouth are made at the back (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)

Phoneme Collapse – When your child uses 1 sound to replace lots of sounds. (e.g. 'I like the green dinosaur' might sound like 'I died duh deen dinodore')

When should I seek support if I am worried about my child's speech?

- If your child is not able to use single sounds more than 6 months after the expected age (please refer to Part 1: Single Speech Sounds).
- If your child is still using the errors which are typically seen in speech sound development more than 6 months after the age they should resolve.
- If your child is using any of the unusual errors above.
- If you notice any other errors your child is making that seem unusual.