

Speech – 0 to 8yrs

What is speech?

Speech describes how a person makes sounds using their lips, tongue, teeth and voice box. Learning to communicate is a step-by-step process for all children. Most children's speech slowly becomes clearer as they get older and have more practice. While each child develops speech at their own rate, there is a general pattern to children's sound development.

Here's how a child's speech usually develops:

0-2 years

Speech sounds that are developing:



m, b, p, w,
n, t, d

By 2yrs old, an adult can understand 25-50% of a child's speech

2-4 years

Speech sounds that are developing:

h, z, y, ch, g, k, f,
l, sh, ng (as in king)



By the age of 3yrs old, an adult can understand 50-75% of a child's speech

4-6 years

Speech sounds that are developing:



j, s, z, r, v

By the age of 6 years, an adult can understand 75-100% of a child's speech.

6-8 years

Speech sound that is developing:

th

By 8 years, an adult will understand 100% of a child's speech.



Children simplify adult speech as they learn to produce speech sounds. Often, children will change one sound for another sound such as 'w' for 'r', as in 'wed' for 'red'. Children may miss sounds in words or shorten words to make them easier to say. These ways of making speech easier create patterns of errors, which are called 'phonological processes'. These are part of normal development and each child develops these 'processes' differently. However, extended or frequent use of these processes, or many missing sounds in their speech, could indicate delayed or disordered speech development and a Speech Pathologist should be consulted.

Helping your baby to talk

- Talk to your baby often, but make sure you speak slowly
- Use a lots of different of words and focus on single words which are part of everyday life – e.g. nappy, bath, milk
- Have fun with sounds and actions and encourage your child to copy the actions you do as well as what you say e.g. blowing kisses and raspberries
- Use gestures to help show meaning such as waving goodbye
- Give your baby time to listen and talk back to you, and praise all attempts at making sounds



Tips for 2-4 years

- Use speech that is clear and simple for your child to imitate
- Ask questions that require your child to make a choice
- Have fun with sounds and words, make animal noises, sing simple songs and nursery rhymes together
- Encourage and praise all attempts to speak



Tips for 4-8 years

- Continue to help your child learn new words
- Encourage your child to give directions
- Talk about words that rhyme
- Talk about words that begin or end with the same sound
- Model correct speech: when a word is said incorrectly, say the word correctly for them and ask them to have a go saying it
- Encourage all attempts to speak – and they are never too old for praise!

This information was collected from the following sources.

For more information, please see:

- Speech Pathologist Caroline Bowen - [/www.speech-language-therapy.com/](http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/)
- Speech Pathology Australia - [/www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/)
- Derbyshire Speech and Language Therapy Services - [/www.speech.derbys.nhs.uk/](http://www.speech.derbys.nhs.uk/)
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association - [/www.asha.org/public/speech/development/](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/)