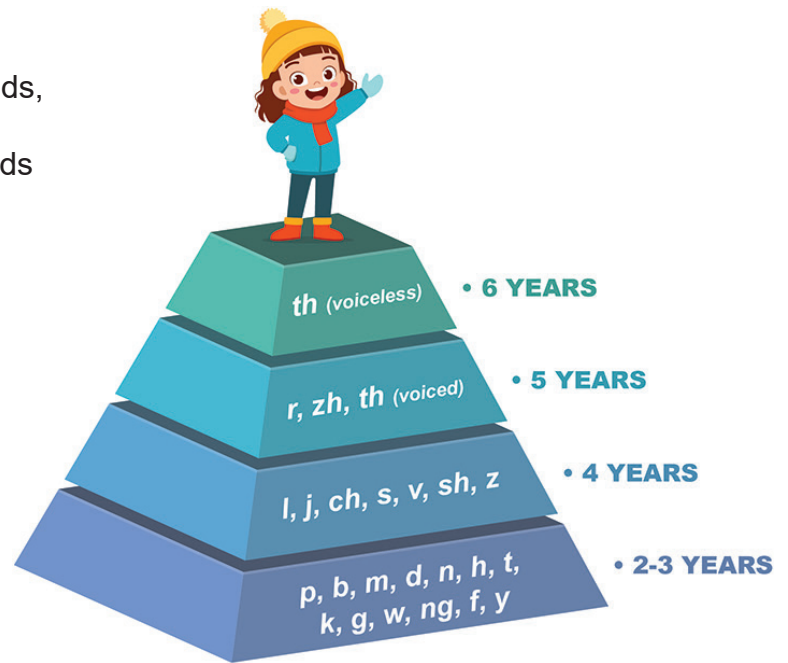


# Building early speech sounds (articulation)

Articulation is making speech sounds in any language. If a child has trouble saying some sounds, other people may have difficulty understanding them. In their first year, babies may produce sounds such as “ooo,” “aah,” “mmm,” “dada” and “baba.” Children begin to master speech sounds between about 2 and 8 years of age.

If you notice that your child is not making sounds as expected (see the image) or people who know your child well have trouble understanding them, it may be a good idea to see a speech-language pathologist.

Here are some ways parents and caregivers can help their child use correct sounds during daily routines:



- 1. BE FACE-TO-FACE:** Let your child see your mouth when you speak. Seeing how you make different sounds can help your child learn to make new sounds.
- 2. REFLECT AND EMPHASIZE:** When your child makes a speech error, repeat what they said and emphasize the correct sound. For example, if your child says “tat” while petting a cat, you could say “Cat! Nice cat. The cat is purring.” Emphasizing the correct sound can help your child build awareness of that sound.
- 3. GO SLOW:** Speak to your child using a slow, relaxed pace of speech. Speaking slowly can make sounds come out more clearly and accurately. If possible, stretch out the sound you want your child to practice. For example, say, “The s-s-s-snake says s-s-s-s.”
- 4. MODEL, DON’T CORRECT:** Try not to draw attention to your child’s speech errors. For example, instead of saying, “It’s not thock, it’s sock,” model and emphasize the correct sound, then continue your conversation.
- 5. REPEAT:** Children need to hear sounds and words many times before they can use them on their own. Be patient.
- 6. PLAY GAMES:** Play games such as I Spy, playdough, matching activities and hide-and-seek. You can also make a scrapbook, sing songs and read books that include your child’s target sounds. These activities can help make learning new sounds fun.
- 7. HEARING:** Hearing difficulties can affect a child’s ability to hear and make speech sounds properly. Monitor your child’s speech development if they had frequent ear infections as a baby or toddler or if they have been diagnosed with hearing loss.