**Working on speech sounds**

When children learn to use a new sound, they learn in stages. The stages start at the easiest level (bottom of the ladder!), and as your child improves you move towards the harder levels (top of the ladder!).

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**Top tips:**

**ch**

* Do not correct your child’s sound at levels above what you are working on (e.g., if they are working on ‘t’ in single words, do not correct this sound in conversation).
* The stages you need to work through are very small and it is important to work through them in order. It is also important not to move on from one stage to another before your child is ready. You may need to spend quite a few weeks on each stage. Also go back over the earlier stages for extra practise even once you have moved on. Before proceeding to the next stage your child must be achieving 80-90% accuracy at the current stage.

**t**

**p**

**d**

* While you are working on a sound it is important not to correct any other sound errors that your child makes, e.g., if working on the ‘t’ sound, do not correct the ‘sh’ or ‘k’ or ‘l’ sound etc.

**sh**

* Remember to make the practice fun. Frequent, short sessions are better than one long one. Try to set aside 15 minutes at least three times a week, more if you can!

**g**

**n**

**Game ideas**

Picture cards are often needed to help your child practise the sound they are working on. If you are working with a Speech and Language Therapist, they may provide you with some, alternatively ask your school / setting what picture cards they are using, and they may be able to share some with you. Below are some activity ideas for fun games you can play with picture cards! Vary the games you play each time you practise as this will help to keep the activities fun!

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* Board Games

Use favourite board games (e.g., snakes and ladders). Before each person’s turn, they must say the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture.

You can also vary this by having the person roll the dice and then say a sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the same number of pictures as what they rolled, e.g., your child rolled 5 on dice and then chooses 5 pictures to talk about etc. Then they can move in the game. If everybody playing the game does this on their turn, your child will hear good models of the sound too!

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* Puzzles

Use different puzzles. Your child says the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture card and then gets a piece of the puzzle to put together.

* Around the House

Put pictures in random places around the house (e.g., on a chair, over a door frame) and each time a person in your house goes near that picture they must say the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture (e.g., when they sit on the chair or when they walk through the door frame). Alternatively play hide-and-seek with the pictures. Move the pictures around for a bit of variety!

* Memory-pairs

Play memory with the pictures (ensure you have two of each card to play pairs). Every time a person turns over a picture, they say the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture.

* Skittles / Bowling

j0199256Make bowling pins out of tissue boxes / drink bottles / drink cans / toilet roll holders. Place a picture under each pin (you could use blu-tac / tape to stick them on). Use a soft ball to bowl the pins over. Say the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture under / on the pins knocked down.

You can also vary this by having the person say a sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the same number of pictures as pins they bowled over, e.g., your child knocks over 5 pins and then chooses 5 pictures to name.

* Ball Game

Say the sound / nonsense word / real word / sentence for the picture and then your child gets to throw / bounce / catch a ball / beanbag / balloon etc.

*HM00387_***Saying the sound on its own**

The first thing your child needs to do is to learn how to say the new sound on its own. See if they can copy you when you say the sound, e.g, ‘ch’. It may help if you are both looking into a mirror so that your child can see your mouth and their own.

If they can copy you, see if they can say the target sound, e.g., ‘ch’ without any help. Try some of the games suggested on the previous pages to help practise the sound.

HM00387_**Saying the sound in nonsense words**

This will help your child practise blending the new sound with vowel sounds. We avoid using real words at this stage as your child is still likely to blend these incorrectly. They will need to practise blending the new sound with other sounds until it is easy! If they were to move straight onto real words they recognise, it is likely that your child would habitually say the wrong sound, e.g., blending ‘ch’ with ‘air’ becomes ‘chair’ which they might say as ‘tair’.

Begin by familiarising your child with the vowel sounds on the next page (“ah”, “oo” etc.). Alternatively, your child’s school or setting may already be using a certain phonics programme with pictures with the children. It does not matter which pictures are used, as long as they are used consistently. Play games similar to the ones you did to learn the target sound as before.

Once your child can remember all of the vowel sounds, see if they can put each vowel picture with each of the single sound pictures to create new nonsense words. Make sure your child practises putting the target sound at the beginning, middle and ends of the made-up words.

To start with they may need a small gap between the consonant and vowel picture before fully blending the picture. Make this gap smaller and smaller each time. If you hear an error when they fully blend the sound practise more with a gap between them, e.g., “t—oo” before “too”.

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HM00387_**Saying the sound in real words**

When your child is able to produce nonsense words containing the target sound, they are ready to move on to real words. You can use minimal pair pictures. This is where each pair has a similar word with only one sound being different – e.g. chair/tair, bee/key etc.

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These pairs help to make your child more aware of the errors they make. For example, if you child says “tea” for “key”, using the pairs will help them understand that they have to say the word correctly to get the right message across.

The first step in using these pairs is to go through and discuss each picture pair with your child, so that they know what the picture is called. For example: chair/hair– you might say “This picture shows a chair, it is very far away. This picture is hair, I have brown hair.”

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The next step is to play a guessing game. Your child says the name of a picture and you point to the one that was said. If your child says “bear”, you will point to bear. If, however, they meant to say “pear” instead, then they will most likely tell you that you pointed to the wrong one. You need to explain this error to your child. For example, “but you said ‘bear’, so I pointed to bear. This one (point) is pear. Try saying ‘b-air’” etc.

*Variation*: Have a pair of the pictures (e.g., bear/pear) between you and your child, have your child close their eyes and then hide something (e.g., a sticker, a button) under one of the pictures. Have your child guess which picture it is under (e.g., “pear”) and then tell you so that you can turn it over and show them if it is there. Make sure you turn over the picture they say (e.g., “bear”) not the picture that they meant (e.g., “pear”). If you turn over the picture they did not mean, your child will most likely tell you that you turned over the wrong one. Then you can explain this error to your child.

**Single Pictures – Talking**

This involves using pictures with the target sound at the beginning, middle or end. If you have not been given pictures by a Speech and Language Therapist or your child’s school or setting, there are lots available at [www.mommyspeechtherapy.com/?page\_id=55](http://www.mommyspeechtherapy.com/?page_id=55)

Practise saying these pictures using the games described above, or make up some of your own games! Continue at this stage until your child is able to say the target sound well in all the words, whether the sound is at the beginning, middle or end of each word.

HM00387_**Saying the sound in sentences**

**Phrase Practise**

Once your child can say the target sound words easily, they can start to put them into short phrases. Cut out single sounds picture or simple word pictures containing the target sound then hide it in different places around your house. When your child has found each picture, encourage them to say “I found the (Insert target sound/ word)!”.

**Sentence Practise**

When your child is able to do phrases consistently, make the games a little bit harder. Ask your child to find target objects / pictures and tell you where he was hiding – e.g. “the key was hiding behind the cupboard!”, or “the pan was under the television!” etc. Listen for all the target sounds in the sentence and see if your child is able to say them correctly. If not, look to see if they self-correct, e.g. “the cheese was under the tair, um, chair”. This is a positive step and means your child is becoming more aware of their speech. If they do not self-correct, repeat the sentence accurately yourself, e.g. “the cheese was under the chair” and emphasise the ‘ch’ sound, or ask a question, e.g. “Was Cheese really under the tair?!” to see if this prompts your child to say the sentence with more accuracy. With more practise, your child should hear any errors and correct themselves. Use any of the games described above to encourage phrase and sentence practise, or make up games of your own!

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**Saying the sound in conversation!**

Your child may now be using the target sound in words in their everyday speech. If not, keep practising the above activities but avoid continually correcting your child’s attempts at these words in conversation. It is better for your child to hear you saying the word correctly and commenting on the fact that the word contains the target sound. Do not expect them to repeat it correctly. If said spontaneously, this is okay. For example,

Child – “Where is the tair?”

Adult – “The **chair** is over there!”

“**Chair** starts with a ‘ch’ sound, doesn’t it?”

**Finally**

The most important thing to remember is not to move onto a new stage unless your child is ready. If they find the work particularly difficult, please discuss with your child’s school or setting, or contact your local Speech and Language Therapy service.