

Babbled sounds develop into attempts at real words. Vowel sounds develop first and the consonants follow later. Generally children can say these sounds:

Sound	50% of children	90% of children
Common vowels	1 ½ to 2 years	3 years
p b m n t d w	1 ½ to 2 years	3 years
k g f h y	1 ½ to 3 years	4 years
ng s	1 ½ to 3 years	5 years
l	3 to 3 ½ years	6 years
sh ch j z v	3 ½ to 4 ½ years	6 years
r	4 ½ to 5 years	7 years
Clusters (such as cl fl br tr sm st sk etc)	5 years	7 years
Clusters (such as str skr spl etc)	5 years plus	7 years plus

It is also common for children to mispronounce words. Some things you might hear include:

Missing off the ends of words “dog” is said as “do”	Usually heard up until 2 ½ years
Sounds made at the back of the mouth (k or g) are made at the front (t or d) “cat” is said as “tat”, “go” as “do”	Usually heard up until 3 years
A long sound (s) is said as a short sound (t) e.g.: “sun” is said as “tun”	Can be heard up until 4 years
When two sounds are said together (eg: sp), one is missed out “star” is said as “tar”	Normally heard up until 4 ½ years
Putting the sounds in the wrong order “caterpillar” is said as “paterkiller”	Can be heard up until 5 years (but some adults do it as well!)

Helping Children with Speech Sounds



Speech sound development is a complex process and can take time to develop. Therefore there may be times when you don't understand your child. This can be frustrating but do not worry; there are some useful strategies you can try in this leaflet.

Sounds develop in a particular order and some are more difficult than others, for example “f” is harder than “p”.

There are other sounds which you would expect to hear later; for example “sp”, “f” and “cr”. (See the table overleaf for further information.)

Avoid.....

- ☹ Don't tell the child that they have made a mistake ... instead ... Always accept the child's attempt at a word, however unclear it may seem.

- ☹ Don't try to make the child say a sound or word correctly. This may lead to frustration or a negative attitude towards speaking.

- ☹ *Never* let the child *talk with a dummy* in their mouth.



Do.....

- ☺ Turn off the TV, radio and DVD whilst you practise so the child can hear you and other people speaking

- ☺ Always be positive about the child's speech.

- ☺ Encourage the child to talk and play with others. This will help their communication skills and confidence to develop.

- ☺ Repeat the word clearly back to the child.
Child: “look, a tat”
You: “Yes it's a cat”

- ☺ Listen to *what* the child says and not *how* they say it.

- ☺ The child will be trying as hard as they can so praise their efforts and carry on being a good model.

If you are having trouble understanding the child you could:

- ✓ **Ask them to say it again**
- ✓ **Repeat back part of the message;**
e.g. “Going where?” or “Mum said what?”
- ✓ **Ask them to tell you some more about it**
- ✓ **Can they show you or take you there?**

Once you think you have grasped what the child has said, repeat it back to them.