

Speech sound developmental norms

Children's speech develops gradually throughout childhood, beginning with just vowel type sounds, all the way through to complex sound sequences. Although all children develop speech sounds at a slightly different rate, there are some generalisations that can be made about approximately when children develop specific sounds.

Articulation

Some children have difficulty making specific sounds in isolation (making the sound on its own). The table below gives information about the ages at which children would be expected to be able to make the sounds used in English (based on information from Dodd et al. 2002).

Age	Sounds that are present	Sounds that are absent
By 3;5	All vowels p b t d k g m n ng f v s z h w l y	th (noisy or quiet) sh, ZH (sound in the middle of mea <u>s</u> ure) ch, j r
By 3;11	All above, plus: ch	th (noisy or quiet) sh, ZH (sound in the middle of mea <u>s</u> ure) j r
By 4;5	All above, plus: ZH (sound in the middle of mea <u>s</u> ure) j	th (noisy or quiet) sh r
By 4;11	As above	th (noisy or quiet) sh r
By 5;5	All above, plus: sh	th (noisy or quiet) r
By 5;11	As above	th (noisy or quiet) r
By 6;5	All above, plus: r	th (noisy or quiet)
By 6;11	As above	th (noisy or quiet)
Above 7;00	As above, plus: th (noisy or quiet)	None

If your child is not able to make speech sounds in isolation 1 year or more after they should have developed (see above table), please refer them to Speech and Language Therapy.

Phonology

Some children are able to make speech sounds in isolation, but have difficulty using these sounds in words. Children with delayed speech often present with 'processes' (patterns of speech errors). These processes would still be typical in younger children, but have not resolved at the expected age. The table below summarises when typical speech processes usually resolve.

Speech process	Definition	Approximate age process is no longer seen
Final consonant deletion	Missing off a consonant at the end of a word E.g. cat → ca_	2 years
Voicing and devoicing	Confusing 'noisy' and 'quiet' sounds E.g. pig → big dog → dock	3 years
Consonant harmony	Making a sound more similar to another sound in the word E.g. mine → mime	3 years
Stopping	Replacing a 'long' sound with a 'short' sound E.g. food → pood sun → tun	3 years, 5 months
Fronting	Replacing a 'back' sound with a 'front' sound E.g. car → tar	4 years
Weak syllable deletion	Missing off a 'quieter' syllable in a word E.g. banana → nana	4 years
Cluster reduction	Missing off a consonant when there are 2 or 3 consonants together E.g. snake → nake	5 years
Gliding	Replacing the sounds 'r' and 'l' with 'w' and 'y' E.g. red → wed like → yike	6 years

If your child is doing either of the following, please refer them to Speech and Language Therapy:

- Using 4 or more speech processes beyond the age at which they are typically no longer seen (for example, a four-year-old who is presenting with voicing, stopping, fronting and consonant harmony)
- using any speech pattern at least 18 months beyond the age at which it is typically no longer seen (for example, a three-and-a-half-year-old who is presenting with final consonant deletion).

Please note – the errors summarised in the above table are ones that we see in typical speech sound development, however some children will be making other errors in their speech. If you are concerned about the child's speech and they are making errors not described above, please consider completing a referral and describing the errors that the child is making.