



Help Kids Talk and our partners take a collective approach to encouraging the speech, language and communication of our babies, children and young people. We believe everyone within our communities, organisations and settings can play a valuable role in supporting our children's speech, language and communication development.

We know that making small changes can have a big impact and that the best outcomes are achieved when babies, children and young people spend time in environments where values and priorities are conducive to implementing these changes.

Top Tips for Children with unclear speech

Some children with unclear speech do not realise they are saying words wrongly - other children are very aware that their speech is unclear, but they are not yet able to change it!



It's therefore really important that we listen to **WHAT** the child is saying and not **HOW** they are saying it.

1: Let them know you are listening!

Even when you don't understand every word the child is saying, show them you are interested in what they have to say by getting down to their level, making eye contact with them and giving them your full attention.

emphasize the correct sounds, without asking them to say it again.

When you have only understood PART of the sentence, repeat back the words which you think you have understood and check with the child that you have heard it correctly. This shows the child that you are interested, and they have been able to communicate part of their message successfully. It gives them a chance to repeat the rest of the message or say it in a different way.

2: Repeat their speech and emphasize the correct sounds, but **DON'T** ask the child to say it again.

When you **KNOW** what the child was trying to say, repeat it back and



3: Talk about things in the 'here and now.'

In order to give the child positive experiences of successful communication, provide a concrete context for your interaction, by talking about objects and activities that you can both see and be involved in.

4: Offer choices.

When appropriate, offer a young child two options, so that they can try to say one simple word, but still communicate what they want

5: Ask the child to show you or tell you another way.

If you are struggling to understand a really important word, ask the child to show you it or take you to it, as young children often talk about things which are in the room. Ask older children to describe the word (e.g. what it's for, where you might find it etc) or say it another way. This could give you the clues you need to work out what they were trying to say.

6: Encourage the child to make gestures or natural signs alongside their speech.

This can really help other people understand them. Do the same yourself so they don't feel awkward!

7: Employ help such as a home-school diary.

The child's family or carer could provide photographs and a list of family names, pet names, important places and interests.

Adults at home, in school and in clubs, could record significant things that happen in a 'home-school diary' that would provide the adults with a context for conversations and help them understand who or what the child is talking about.

8: Don't presume- think!

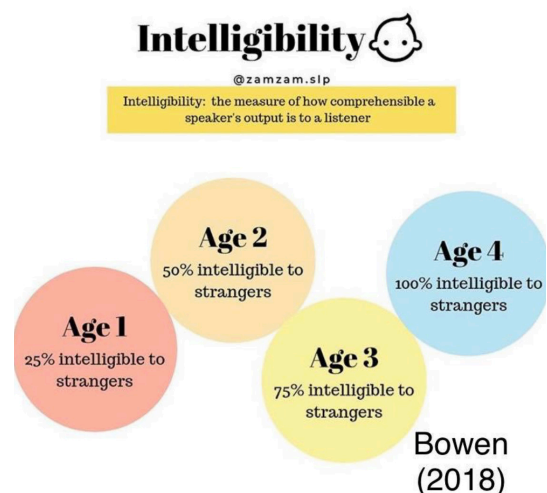
Just because a child has a speech sound difficulty does not mean they have difficulty understanding you or have difficulties with their hearing. Don't talk for them but be patient and give them time to talk. If you think hearing or understanding is ALSO an issue for this child, consider getting this checked.

9: Admit you don't understand!

If the child has repeated the word, tried to say it in a different way or can't show you what they are talking about, let the child know that you can't understand what they are saying and say 'sorry.' This acknowledges the child's attempt at communication- be as reassuring as possible!

10: Consider if referral to Speech and Language Therapy is necessary.

Even though it takes some time for speech sounds to develop and we expect children's speech not to be fully developed until around 7 or 8 years of age, it is important to recognise when specialist help is needed.



If people outside of the child's family are struggling to understand 75% of a three-year old's speech or 100 % of a four-year old's speech, they would benefit from support.

Check out the referral pathways for Speech and Language Therapy advice and support in your local area.

Check out our website and subscribe to our mailing list so you don't miss out on any new developments.



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