

Health & Wellbeing



Only About
Children

Speech Sounds

Outline of how speech sounds are acquired by children between the ages of 0-5 years

1 YEAR OF AGE

The child babbles using different sounds like “bababa” or “putudume” and copies different sounds you say. By 1½ years your child uses the sounds that are easiest to make like m, p, b, d, w, and h and babbles sounds together like real sentences, such as “bapotimawabe”. You will understand your child about 25% of the time.

2 YEARS OF AGE

The child uses sounds like m, p, b, w, t, d, n, and h. Most vowel sounds are said correctly e.g. ah, ee, i, oh, oo. You will now understand your child between 50 to 75% of the time. By 2½ years of age the child uses some sounds at the beginning and end of words. Your child may also repeat easier sounds like “bubu” for bubbles or leave off harder sounds like “ba” for ball, bat, or bus.

3 YEARS OF AGE

Uses sounds like m, p, b, w, t, d, n, h, k, g, f, s, y, vowels, and ng e.g. sing. You will understand your child 75% of the time. By 3½ years your child uses sounds at the beginning of words (bus instead of us) and at the end of words (boat instead of boa). Your child now uses vowel sounds correctly almost all of the time.

4 YEARS OF AGE

Your child uses sounds like m, p, b, w, t, d, n, h, k, g, f, y, l, s, z, sh, ch, j, vowels, and ng. You now understand your child over 90% of the time. Your child now uses ‘l’ blends and ‘s’ blends, such as ‘blue’ and ‘stop’ and is easily understood by siblings, friends, parents, and strangers.

5 YEARS OF AGE

Your child says most sounds correctly, including r, however v and th may still be developing.

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WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

If you are concerned about your child's speech development, it is recommended that you have their hearing checked by an audiologist. If you cannot understand your child as described above or if your child becomes frustrated when attempting to communicate, then it is advised that you see a Speech Pathologist.

References:

- Bowen, C. (1998). *Developmental phonological disorders. A practical guide for families and teachers*. Melbourne: ACER Press.
- Grunwell, P. (1997). Natural phonology. In M. Ball & R. Kent (Eds.), *The new phonologies: Developments in clinical linguistics*. San Deigo, CA: Singular Publishing Group, Inc.
- Kilminster, M.G.E., & Laird, E.M. (1978) Articulation development in children aged three to nine years. *Australian Journal of Human Communication Disorders*, 6, 1, 23-30.