

## What is speech?

Speech is how we use our mouth, tongue, lips, and voice to make sounds and words so that other people can understand what we are saying.

Children learn how to make different speech sounds as they grow.

## How clear should my child's speech be?

### Age

### Expressive (using) language

3 years

75% intelligible

4 years

90-100% intelligible

5 years

Almost 100 % intelligible with occasional errors on /th/ or/ r/

6+ years

Fully intelligible with adult-like speech

Check the milestones below your child has reached and what to expect next:

### Age

### Expressive (using) language

2-3 years

p, b, m, d, n, h, t, k, g, w, ng, f, y

4 years

l, j, ch, s, v, sh, z

5 years

r, zh, th (voiced)

6+ years

th (voiceless)

## Ways to build speech at home

### 1. Model Speech Sounds

- Speak slowly and clearly, using natural speech
- Emphasise tricky sounds when you model them:
- “Look, a snake! Ssss-snake!”
- Avoid correcting too often — instead, repeat the word the right way so your child hears it clearly.

### 2. Repeat and Expand

- When your child says a word, repeat it back correctly and add a little more:
- Child: “Tar!”
- Parent: “Yes, a car! A big red car!”

### 3. Use Everyday Moments

- Talk about what you’re doing together — meals, bath time, shopping, or play.
- Use words that include your child’s target sounds naturally (e.g., “soap,” “sun,” “sock”).

### 4. Play Sound Games

- Play listening games like “I spy something starting with /b/.”
- Read rhyming books and sing songs that highlight sounds.
- Use mirrors to make silly faces or look at how your mouth moves for different sounds.

### 5. Read Together Daily

- Reading helps children hear sounds and patterns in words.
- Emphasise by repeating words or phrases in the story.
- Choose books with repetitive text or sounds (e.g., “Brown Bear, Brown Bear”).

### 6. Encourage, Don’t Pressure

- Praise effort, not perfection — “I love how you tried that word!”
- Keep speech practice
- Keep it fun and short — children learn best when relaxed and playing.

## When to See a Speech Pathologist for Your Preschooler (Ages 3–5)

Every child develops at their own pace — but early support makes a big difference!

Use this checklist to decide if it might be time to chat with one of our speech pathologists.

### Speech Sounds (How Your Child Pronounces Words)

- My child's speech is often hard to understand
- Strangers have trouble understanding my child.
- My 4–5 year old still uses “baby” sounds (e.g. “tat” for cat, “poon” for spoon).
- My child leaves off sounds in words (e.g., “ca” for cat).
- My child gets frustrated when others can't understand them.

### Social Communication (Talking & Playing with Others)

- My child rarely starts conversations or play with other children.
- My child doesn't take turns in talking
- My child finds it hard to use words to express feelings or needs.
- My child has trouble understanding facial expressions or social cues.

### Language (Understanding & Using Words)

- My child has trouble following simple directions (e.g. “Get your shoes and hat”).
- My child doesn't ask or answer simple questions.
- My child uses only short or incomplete sentences.
- My child struggles to tell simple stories or talk about their day.
- My child often copies what others say instead of answering directly.

### Voice, Fluency & Hearing

- My child's voice sounds very hoarse, nasal, or different from other children.
- My child stutters or has trouble getting words out smoothly.
- My child often asks “What?” or doesn't respond when called.

## When to See a Speech Pathologist for Your Child (Kindy-Year 2)

Every child develops at their own pace — but early support makes a big difference!

Use this checklist to decide if it might be time to chat with one of our speech pathologists.

### Speech Sounds (How Your Child Pronounces Words)

My child's speech is still hard for others to understand.

My child has trouble with sounds that most classmates can say easily.

My child avoids certain words or sounds.

My child feels frustrated or shy about speaking.

### Literacy skills

My child has trouble learning letter sounds or blending sounds to read.

My child finds it hard to remember sight words.

My child struggles to understand what they read.

My child can read but finds it hard to talk about what happened in the story.

My child has difficulty spelling simple, familiar words.

### Social Communication

My child has trouble joining or keeping up with conversations.

My child doesn't take turns when talking.

### Language (Understanding & Using Words)

My child has trouble following classroom instructions.

My child struggles to tell a story in order (beginning–middle–end).

My child finds it hard to think of the right words.

My child's sentences are short, jumbled, or missing words.

My child finds it hard to understand longer questions or new words.

### Voice, Fluency & Hearing

My child's voice sounds hoarse, nasal, or different from other children's.

My child stutters or gets stuck on words.

My child often asks "What?" or doesn't respond when called.

My child finds it hard to stay on topic.

My child struggles to use tone, facial expressions, or gestures appropriately.

My child prefers to play alone or talk mostly to adults.

**If you ticked two or more boxes — or if you're unsure — it's a good idea to visit a Speech Pathologist.**

It's never too early to get help for your child's speech development. You can talk to your local GP or contact a Speech Pathologist directly to book an assessment and find out how to best support your child's communication.

You can contact our friendly reception team at Socle Therapy & Learning 8068 1850 to book an assessment with one of our Speech Pathologists.