

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Get to Know Your Speech Sounds: /s/

How is the Sound Produced?



- /s/ is typically made with the tongue tip touching the alveolar ridge (the bony ridge behind the teeth). You can also touch the tongue tip to the lower front teeth.
- Teeth are together.
- Lips are apart with the corners pulled back, almost like a smile.
- Air is flowing over the tongue through the front of the mouth. /s/ is a fricative, so the air flows for a longer time.
- The voice is off; the vocal cords are not vibrating.

When Does the Sound Develop?



- 50% of children produce the /s/ sound by age 3. This is when the sound is emerging.
- 90% of children produce the /s/ sound by age 8. This is when the sound should be acquired. If the child is not producing the sound by this point, speak with a speech-language pathologist.

Common Errors*



- The /s/ sound is one of the most commonly used consonant sounds in English; this makes someone's speech tricky to understand if /s/ is misarticulated.
- The /s/ sound can be misarticulated with a frontal lisp. This is when the tongue comes out in front of the teeth when it should stay behind, making a "th" sound.
- /s/ has a "slushy" sound quality when someone has a lateral lisp. Air escapes through the sides of the tongue rather than being directed through the front of the mouth.

- /s/ is impacted by some phonological processes:



Stopping— Fricative sounds that should be made for a long time are substituted for a shorter sound (e.g., "see" becomes "tee"). This process should be gone by age 3.



Cluster Reduction— /s/ is often in consonant clusters, which is when two or more consonants are put together. The /s/ sound is taken away in the cluster during cluster reduction (e.g., "stop" becomes "top"). When the cluster contains the /s/ sound, this process should be gone by age 5.



Tips for Cueing**

1. Verbal



- "Teeth together!"
- "Tongue behind your teeth!"
- "Big smile!"
- "Make the snake sound. Ssssssss!"

(*"Tips for Cueing" continued on page 2*)

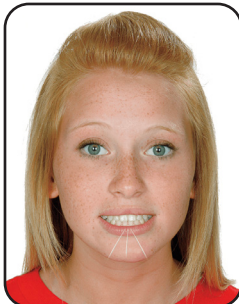


2. Visual



- Model how the sound "looks". Keep your teeth together, tongue behind your teeth. Or, show the student the picture above.
- Have the child make the /s/ sound in the mirror. Ask the child if they saw their tongue. Were their teeth closed?
- Close the hand before a word with an /s/ sound to remind the child to keep their teeth together.

3. Tactile



- Model how the sound "looks". Keep your teeth together, tongue behind your teeth. Or, show the student the picture shown at left.
- Have the child make the /s/ sound in the mirror. Ask the child if they saw their tongue. Were their teeth closed?
- Close the hand before a word with an /s/ sound to remind the child to keep their teeth together.

Practice***



- Spelling can be confusing! Many letters can represent one sound; /s/ can be made with the letter(s) "s", "c", and "ss". The letter "x" is actually a /ks/ cluster. Many words have the letter "s", but the word is pronounced with the /z/ sound (voice on), as in "dogs", "was", and "closet". "Sh" contains the letter "s" but does not make the /s/ sound. Even though a word may end with another letter, if /s/ sound is pronounced last, it is considered an /s/ final word (e.g., case). The /s/ sound is underlined in these practice targets.

-Phonemic Awareness

- Name each picture. Point to the pictures with the /s/ sound.†



-Isolation

- s-s-s
- ssssssss
- s-s-ssssss

-Isolation

- see-see-see-see-see
- ice-ice-ice-ice-ice
- isa-isa-isa-isa-isa
- see-sa-see-sa-see-sa
- see-sa-say-so-see-sa-say-so

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-Word



Initial	Final	Medial	Recurring	Blend
<u>s</u> ea <u>l</u>	bu <u>s</u>	f <u>u</u> ssy	<u>s</u> ass	<u>s</u> kip
<u>s</u> oa <u>p</u>	ac <u>ro</u> ss	ba <u>s</u> e <u>bb</u> all	<u>s</u> au <u>c</u> er	cr <u>is</u> py
<u>s</u> and <u>w</u> ich	fu <u>r</u> io <u>s</u>	er <u>a</u> se <u>r</u>	M <u>is</u> si <u>ss</u> ippi	pe <u>s</u> t

-Phrase



- on the ceiling
- chase the cat
- chery blossom
- toss the basebball
- assemble the see-saw
- the slow snail

-Sentence



- She drove a silver car.
- The teacher arrived to class late.
- My dog is a messy eater.
- Yes, the dinosaur was silly.
- We had recess at sunset.
- Slone can spin the basketball.

-Structured Language

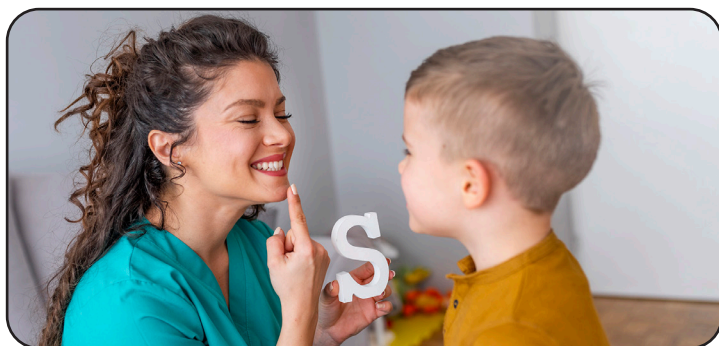


- Tell a story about a super loud, silly sound with your best /s/.
- Draw a picture of a castle. Explain your picture using the words "castle", "sign", and "princess" with your best /s/ sound.
- Pick out a page in a book and mark the words with the /s/ sound with sticky notes. Read the page with your best /s/ sound.

-Unstructured Language



- Talk about a vacation using your best /s/ sound.
- Explain how to play your favorite game using your best /s/ sound.
- Read a page of a book with your best /s/ sound (unmarked).



*These milestones are based on monolingual, native English speakers. If a child speaks more than one language, acquisition of English sounds can be influenced by the other language(s). These differences do not necessarily indicate a speech sound disorder. Please consult with a speech-language pathologist.

**Not all cues are appropriate in all cases. Please consult with a speech-language pathologist before cueing.

***Ask your child's speech-language pathologist which targets are appropriate to practice.

† "Mouse", "sail", and "lasso" contain the /s/ sound.

Resources:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d.) Age of Customary Consonant Production. (Practice Portal). Retrieved August, 16, 2022, from www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Articulation-and-Phonology/.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d.) Selected Phonological Processes. (Practice Portal). Retrieved August, 16, 2022, from www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Articulation-and-Phonology/.

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