Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Get to Know Your Speech Sounds:
Introduction (Part 2)

Get to Know Your Speech Sounds is a collection of Handy Handouts exploring the different sounds of English. Many children with speech sound disorders focus on producing one or a group of these sounds. **Here is some terminology you may see throughout the series:**

Phonological Process: a group of sounds produced in error in a predictable pattern. This can be the omission, addition, or substitution of sounds or syllables. See Handy Handout #66 for details.

Hierarchy of Levels

This is the traditional, step-by-step approach to targeting speech sounds. In most cases, the higher the level, the more difficult it will be to produce the sound. Keep in mind that this is not the only approach!

- **Isolation** – The sound is produced alone, for example /k/. This is a good time to teach tongue placement and learn cues.

- **Syllable** – There are different syllable structures with different levels of complexity, such as vowel consonant (VC), CV, VCV, CVCV, CVC, etc., for example "ak, ka, aka, kaka, kak".

- **Word** – In some cases, clinicians start at the word level when targeting a speech sound. Just like syllables, words vary in complexity, from one-syllable (e.g., <u>c</u>an) to multisyllabic (e.g., <u>c</u>anopy).

- **Phrase** – This is a group of words, usually 2-4, where one word contains the target sound (e.g., a <u>c</u>an of soup).

- **Sentence** – A sentence can include the target sound one time (e.g., She opened a <u>c</u>an of soup) or repeat the sound to increase practice and difficulty (e.g., <u>K</u>ayla <u>c</u>arried a <u>c</u>an of chi<u>ck</u>en sto<u>ck</u>).

- **Structured Language** – The clinician sets up scenarios for the child to produce the sound in longer, more natural speech. This can include reading a story with the target sound in it, retelling a story that includes lots of words with the target sound, or setting up a play activity including objects and actions with the target sound.

- **Unstructured Language** – At the highest level, the child is practicing the sound in the most naturalistic context. Conversations, such as talking about a recent trip or talking about a movie, are unstructured language activities. When the target sound is produced, clinicians will provide feedback on how it sounds.

Sound Position and Complexity

- **Initial** – The target sound occurs in the beginning of the word (e.g., <u>s</u>oup, <u>s</u>eal, <u>s</u>ofter, <u>S</u>eptember). Many times, but not always, clinicians will start by targeting sounds in the initial position.

- **Final** – The target sound occurs at the end of the word (e.g., me<u>ss</u>, hou<u>s</u>e, cactu<u>s</u>, hippopotamu<u>s</u>).

- **Medial** – The target sound occurs in the middle of the word (e.g., mi<u>ss</u>ing, po<u>ss</u>um, le<u>ss</u>on, a<u>ss</u>ignment).

- **Recurring** – The target sound occurs multiple times in the word (e.g., <u>s</u>au<u>c</u>e, <u>s</u>ee<u>s</u>aw, tre<u>s</u>pa<u>ss</u>, <u>s</u>en<u>s</u>ation).

- **Cluster** – The target sound occurs together with another consonant sound (e.g., <u>sk</u>i, <u>sm</u>ell, cri<u>sp</u>y, ca<u>st</u>). Some clusters can contain more than two consonant sounds; these are called complex clusters (e.g., <u>scr</u>ape, <u>spl</u>ash, a<u>mps</u>).

Types of Teaching and Cueing

Clinicians use different types of learning methods and cues to teach children how to produce target speech sounds. Cues are reminders to a child about how to make a sound.

- **Verbal** – Use words to explain how the sound is made (e.g., "Tongue behind your teeth and smile!") or give a little hint (e.g., "Try your strong 's'!").

- **Visual** – Show the student how to make the sound or use a visual aid as a reminder. For example, the child uses a mirror to make sure their tongue is behind their teeth while making the /s/ sound or the clinician making a closed hand to signify keeping teeth together while making the /s/ sound.

- **Tactile** – Give physical touch to demonstrate placement of the articulators (body parts used for speech). For example, the clinician uses a tongue depressor to tap the bony ridge behind the teeth to show the child where their tongue goes to produce the /s/ sound.

Related Handy Handouts®:

Resources:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d.) Speech Sound Disorders: Articulation and Phonology. (Practice Portal). Retrieved July, 27, 2022, from www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Articulation-and-Phonology/.

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