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Cues for Children with Speech Errors: Tips for Teachers and Parents

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Speech therapists rely on verbal and visual prompts to teach children how to correctly produce speech sounds. For example, a child might change the placement of his tongue to say /s/ when the therapist reminds him, "Keep your tongue behind your teeth."

Teachers and parents can also give these prompts. In fact, teachers and parents providing prompts and feedback can help a child generalize their correct articulation to settings outside the speech room.

If you have a child in your class or at home who is working on articulation:

- Model:** Look for times throughout the day (calendar, small group time, meal time, etc.) when you can clearly model the sound a child has difficulty with. The child doesn't need to repeat the sound after you, he or she just needs to hear it produced correctly.



- Praise:** If you hear the child make the sound correctly, make a big deal about it! Don't criticize or ask the child to repeat every word mispronounced; instead, focus on the successful productions.



- Emphasize:** Identify the target sound in classwork. For example, highlight words that contain /r/ in the weekly vocabulary list or in a reading passage for a child who is working on /r/. At home, point out words when reading together or on signs in the community that have the target sound.

Below are some common verbal prompts teachers and parents can use to help a child correctly produce speech sounds. When you are talking with a child one-on-one or have an opportunity to practice a speech word, give a prompt to remind the child how to make the sound. *You should also check with the child's speech-language pathologist for the specific prompts being used during therapy so that the child has consistent prompts in all settings.*



b/p: "pop your lips, press your lips together"



/m/: "press your lips together, make a humming sound"

t/d: "lift the tip of your tongue up"

k/g: "lift the back of your tongue, pull your tongue back"



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(cont.)



F V

/f/: "bite your lower lip and blow, make an angry cat sound"

/l/: "lift the tip of your tongue up"



L

/s/: "make a snake sound, smile and blow"; "keep your tongue behind your teeth" (if the tongue is between the teeth); "blow your air straight out" (if the /s/ sounds "slushy")



S

sh/ch/dj: "use round lips"



Ch J Sh

/r/: "pull your tongue up and back, make a growling sound"

/th/: "put your tongue tip between your teeth and blow"



Th

/s/ blends: "don't forget your snake sound, remember to make two sounds"



Related Handy Handouts®:

[1 – Helping Children with Language Disorders: Phonemic & Semantic Cues](#)

[201 – Types of Articulation Errors – A Simple Guide](#)

[473 – Get a Cue!](#)

Resources:

Davis, K.G. (2017). 5 tips for articulation carryover in the classroom. The ASHA LeaderLive. Accessed 6/7/2023 from <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/5-tips-for-articulation-carryover-in-the-classroom/full/>

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