

How do speech sounds develop?

Did you know the English language has 46 different speech sounds? Production of these sounds is based on tongue position and movement, lip position and movement, airflow, and the presences or absence of vocal fold vibration.

Even though your child may have some sound errors, these errors are considered “developmental” if the child is below the age of mastery. Research shows, that until that age, the child could acquire and use the sound independent of therapy. Speech pathologists try to identify children whose speech cannot be understood much of the time, have multiple errors, have severe production errors such as a lateral lisp, or who continue to have errors in sounds or patterns beyond the age of mastery.

Age at Which 90% of Children Learn Various Speech Sounds
(Smit, et al 1990)

Speech sound	Males	Females	Speech sound	Males	Females
P, M, H, W, B	3 years	3 years	CH	7 years	6 years
N	3 years	3 ½ years	SH	7 years	6 years
K	3 ½ years	3 ½ years	Z	8-9 years	8-9 years
G	4 years	3 ½ years	J	7 years	6 years
D	3 ½ years	3 years	V	5 ½ years	5 ½ years
T	3 ½ years	4 years	TH unvoiced	8 years	6 years
F	3 ½ years	3 ½ years	TH voiced	7 years	4 ½ years
Y	5 years	4 years	Ing	7-9 years	7-9 years
R	8 years	8 years	l-blends	6 years	5 ½ years
L	6 years	5 years	s-blends	7 years	7 years
S	8-9 years	8-9 years	r-blends	8 years	8 years