

HOW TO TARGET ANY SPEECH SOUND

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Here are the **8 steps** for targeting a speech sound (any sound you want).



The information in this guide is intended to be used along side speech therapist evaluation and advice.

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1

AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION

To ensure a child can recognize the differences between sounds. For instance, if a child is substituting the /w/ sound for the /l/ sound (saying "wook" instead of "look"), it's important to check if they can differentiate the two sounds. If they struggle with this, start by introducing minimal pairs - these are pairs of words that differ by only one sound. For example, you could say, "Let's go swim in the ____" and see if they can correctly complete the sentence with "lake" or "wake".

2

ISOLATION

When targeting a specific sound, it's essential to first practice it in isolation, meaning by itself. For instance, if you're focusing on the /l/ sound, encourage the child to repeat the /l/ sound on its own - like /l/, /l/, /l/. The key here is ensuring that the child is accurately producing the targeted sound. It's about maximizing the number of correct repetitions. Once the child demonstrates proficiency, typically with 80-90% accuracy, you can then proceed to syllables.

3

SYLLABLES

To address a sound in syllables, pair the target sound with short and long vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u). For instance, if you're working on the /l/ sound, have the child repeat the /l/ sound with different vowel sounds, like /laa/, /lee/, /lii/, and so on. It's crucial to verify that the child is correctly producing the targeted sound. If they consistently make mistakes - even when pronouncing the sounds slowly - it's best to revert to practicing the sound in isolation.

4

WORDS

To target the sound at the word level it's important to know there are three different positions for the location of the sound you are targeting in a word. Let's say the sound we are targeting is /l/. We can target our sound in the initial position (beginning of a word) like in **llama**, in the medial position (middle of a word) like in **silly**, or in the final position (end of a word) like in **tail**. Ultimately, you start targeting the sound in the position that is easiest and most functional for the child (to get correct productions and so they feel successful). So, the order that word positions are targeted in varies depending on the child's needs. You will practice the target sound until the child can demonstrate mastery at 80-90% accuracy (they say the sound with 80-90% accuracy without models/cues from the speech therapist).

5

PHRASES (2-3 WORDS)/SENTENCES (4+ WORDS)

Once mastery at the word level is achieved, you can move to producing the target sound in connected speech (with other words). You will do this in the same way as the word level. It's important to start with phrases (2-3 words) and then moving to short sentences (4+ words). For example, "my **llama**" and "I see the **llama**."

6

READING (IF APPLICABLE)

To target the sound in a reading task. This will require the child to self-monitor the sound they are targeting and rate of speech (since the speech therapist is not saying the words/phrases/sentences before them). If the child is not demonstrating >80% accuracy, then you can underline or highlight the target sound within the reading material.

7

CONVERSATIONS

To target the sound in conversation. Again, this will require the child to self-monitor the sound. Have a conversation with the child on a topic they are interested in. Are there any errors in the sound you are targeting? In what position? The goal is the child will produce the sound with more than 90-95% accuracy without any modeling or prompting.

8

GENERALIZATION

This is the last step! At this point, the child should have generalized their sound(s) across different communication partners (mom, siblings, friends, speech therapist, etc) and environments (school, home, speech clinic, etc). When the child has achieved this (>90-95% accuracy without any help), they have successfully completed their course of therapy.