

Modeling Speech Sounds

If your child is having trouble pronouncing certain speech sounds, they may need more opportunities to listen to these sounds before they are ready to say them correctly.

Strategies:

Try these strategies during your everyday interactions with your child:

- **Model** correct production of your child's incorrect speech sounds following their production. For example, if your child says, "I need a pork," you can respond by saying "Fork. Here is a fork."
- **Be face to face** with your child when you model these speech sounds. This will help to keep your child's attention. It will also give your child important information about how you use your lips, tongue, teeth and jaw when you produce certain sounds.
- **Emphasize** your child's problem sounds in your own speech. This will draw your child's attention to it.

Here are some ways to emphasize sounds:

- **Pause** just before the word that contains the incorrect sound.
- Make the sound a little **louder**.
- **Stretch** out certain sounds (i.e. saying the sound a little longer). This is a good way to emphasize the following sounds: /m, n, w, h, f, v, s, z, sh, th, l, r/. For example, if your child says "where's my tock", you can say "Sssssock. I'll help you find your ssssock."
- **Hold the position** of your lips, teeth or tongue for a second or two before producing the sound. This is a good way to emphasize sounds that you can't stretch out such as /p, b, t, d, k, g. For example, for /b/, you can hold your lips together for a second or two before saying "ball."
- **Repeat** the word that contains your child's incorrect sound as many times as you can in the minutes that follow your child's error.
- Do not insist that your child repeat the word correctly after you.
- If your child tries to say the word, reinforce their attempts (e.g. "good try").

Activities:

- While reading with your child, point out words in the book that start with your child's incorrect sound. Point to the printed word and the letter that makes the sound (for example, you can point to the word 'soup' and say "ssssoup starts with 'S'. 'S' says ssss." You can even have a larger version of the letter available to make it easier to point it out to your child.
- Collect pictures of words that start with your child's incorrect sound. Collect other pictures that start with sounds that your child can already say. Place all the pictures in a bag. Write and cut out a large version of the letter that corresponds

to your child's problem sound. Identify the letter for your child and the sound it makes (for example: 'F' says "ffff"). Have your child select a picture from the bag. Say the word for your child (remember to emphasize the problem sound) and have them decide whether it starts with the letter. If it does, they can glue it on the letter.

- Collect 5-10 familiar items which start with your child's incorrect sound. For example, if your child's has trouble saying the /k/ sound, you can collect the following items: key, miniature car, cup, comb, card, camera, cat, cow. You can use the items in the following simple games:
 - Hide the items around the room. Label each item as your child finds it (for example, "cow. You found the cow").
 - Place the items in a bag. Close your eyes and have your child remove an item and place it in your hands. Feel the item and guess what it is (Tip: Make a few wrong guesses using some of the other /k/ words before coming up with the correct word).
- Find natural opportunities in the day to practice modeling appropriate speech sounds. For example, observe when your child is engaged in an activity, and whether there is an opportunity to practice a specific sound. Your child may be more receptive to practicing the correct sounds when the activity is meaningful. For example, if your child is dumping buckets at the sand table, model the 's' sound by saying "ssssand" and "messss".

Reminders:

- While completing the above activities, remember to use the strategies described on the front of this handout (e.g. be face to face while you model the sound for your child; emphasize correct production of the sound).
- Focus on having your child **listen** to the correct production of their incorrect sound. Your child may not be ready to produce the sound. Hearing the sound emphasized multiple times will eventually build your child's awareness of the sound.
- Do not repeat your child's speech errors. Instead, model the way the word should sound.
- Remember the beginning, middle, and end when modeling the speech sound/s.
- If your child has several incorrect sounds, pick one or two sounds to focus on at a time. Your Speech-Language Pathologist can help you decide which sounds are appropriate to target.

Daily practice will help your child develop these skills. Choose a time each day when there are limited distractions or time pressures to practice one or two of the suggested strategies.