BLOSSOM FLOURISH GROW

Communication • Connection • Creativity

Speech Sound Development

An English speech guide based on Speech Pathology Australia fact sheets

Sounds develop gradually. A sound used in one word may still be tricky in another. Age guides help identify when extra support may be useful.

By 2 years

A range of sounds is emerging, including p, b, m, t, d, n, h and w. SPA describes about half of speech as understandable at this age.

By 3 years

The range expands to sounds such as k, g, f, s and ng (as in “sing”). Family and friends usually understand most speech.

Around 4 years

Most sounds and many sound combinations are developing well, including sounds such as sh, ch, j and l. Later sounds, including r, v and th, may remain difficult.

By 5 years and beyond

SPA describes speech as almost always understandable in conversation by five. Complex words, sound combinations and th may still be developing.

Ask for support if speech is difficult to understand, communication is frustrating or effortful, or sounds at the start of words are often missing. Consider a hearing check when concerns arise.

Ages are guides, not deadlines. SPA resources use broad age ranges. They are not the same as a sound-by-sound research acquisition chart. Language and dialect differences need individual consideration.

SPA: The Sound of Speech - 0 to 3 years

SPA: The Sound of Speech - preschool and school aged children

BFG summary of SPA guidance; not an SPA-endorsed resource.