



Articulation Improvement through Reading

2.1.4

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What Is Articulation Skill?

Articulation refers to moving the lips and tongue to produce speech sounds in words. Consonant sounds are typically more difficult for children to learn than vowels. Consonants are produced by lifting the tongue or lower lip.

The first sounds in the words *pea*, *bee*, *me*, *tea*, *day*, *knee*, *key*, and *gay* are stops. The mouth is closed completely to produce stop sounds. The first sounds in the words *fee*, *vase*, *thumb*, *the*, *see*, *zoo*, and *shoe* are fricatives, for which the mouth is partly closed. Both stops and fricatives can be produced by raising the lower lip.

The first sounds in the words *pea*, *bee*, *me*, *fee*, and *vee* are produced at the lips. The front of the tongue is raised to produce the first sounds in *tee*, *day*, *knee*, *see*, and *zoo*. The back of the tongue is raised to produce the first sounds in *key*, *gay*, and *shoe*. Two sounds called *liquids* are produced with complex tongue shapes. The first sound in *lay* is produced by raising the tongue tip while lowering the sides of the tongue. The first sound in *ray* is produced by simultaneously raising the back and front of the tongue.

Articulation and Word Learning

Children learn speech sounds as parts of words. When a child learns what a word means, the child also learns the sequence of sounds that represents that meaning. When a child learns the names *mama* and *dada*, the child also learns that /m/ and /d/ are important sounds in English that can each start syllables in words.

Children acquire vocabulary and speech sound production gradually by repeatedly talking about objects and actions. A potent source of child talk about actions and events is children's literature.

Storybook Reading

Helping a child to read a favorite storybook over and over is a good way of improving the child's language abilities. The following are procedures you can use to help your child develop sound production during storybook reading.

Repeatedly Read a Favorite Book

By repeatedly talking about the same book over a period of weeks, you expose the child to similar words, phrases, and sentences. The child will hear and say these words many times. This provides the practice necessary to learn the production of the difficult sounds and sound sequences in the words. Children typically enjoy reading a favorite book repeatedly. With each exposure their reading becomes more independent and they feel more confident in their ability.

Discuss the Pictures

Don't rush through the book by reading the text. Enjoy this time with your child. Start by talking about the picture on each page. Talk about the characters and objects depicted. What are their names? Describe where they are, what they are doing, and what they look like. In talking about a picture from the book, *Little Red Riding Hood*, you can be helping your child say such phrases as "Here is a little girl. Her name is Red Riding Hood. She is wearing a red cape. She is carrying a basket"

Don't do all of the talking yourself. Give your child many opportunities to complete your sentences. Point to the picture of the girl and say, "Oh look! Here is _____." Point to her hand on the basket and say, "Look what she is doing! She is _____."

Help your child make predictions about what will happen on the next page of the story. Ask, "I wonder what will happen next? Where will Little Red Riding Hood be going? Who will she meet in the woods?"

Help your child explain the actions that are important to the story. You can set up these utterances with such phrases as "Little Red Riding Hood was going to Grandma's so she could _____." "She was going through the woods because _____." "She got scared when _____"

Read the Text

After you have established the actions that are occurring in the picture, talk about the relationships between the text and the picture. Point to each word as you read it. When you have read a sentence, go back and point between the printed words and the objects and actions

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depicted in the picture that you talked about earlier. For example, point to the words "Little Red Riding Hood" as you read them. Then, point from the words to the picture of the little girl and say something like "This tells us what the girl's name is: 'Little Red Riding Hood'."

Phrases such as "Little Red Riding Hood" will be predictable because they occur often. Give your child opportunities to read predictable words and phrases in the text as you point between the words and the picture. Point to the words as you read "Little Red _____" and give your child the opportunity to finish the phrase while you point between the picture of the little girl and the words "Riding Hood."

When you reread this page of the book on a later day, more of the text will become predictable for your child. The child will be able to start talking about the text when you turn the page. You can then point to the words in the text that the child uses. For example, if your child turns the page and says, "And this is where Little Red Riding Hood meets the wolf," you can point to the words in the text and say, "That's right! These words say 'Little Red Riding Hood' and this word says it's the wolf that she meets."

Talk about the Sounds in the Words

When reading the text, your child will be using some sound omissions and approximations. Use the print to focus on and model the production of the sounds that should be in the words. Do this in a noncritical way. Talk about how the author chose the words in the book. Talk about how the letters in the word tell your mouth what sounds you should make in reading the book.

If your child produces the word *hat* as "ha_," talk about the consonant that was deleted by pointing to the letter *t* in the printed word *hat* and say, "This word is spelled with a *t* at the end, so we want to put a /t/ sound at the end like when I say 'hat'." Emphasize your production of the word *hat*. Talk about which part of your tongue or lips you moved to make that sound. "Watch: I lift my tongue at the end of that word to make a /t/ sound." Be encouraging, not correcting.

Many children will take this opportunity to try to say the word again. If so, tell your child whether the second production included a sound where one had been omitted before. It is probably not a good idea to demand that your child try to correct production of the word. This may cause the child to become frustrated. Rather, continue to enjoy telling the story while modelling how the words are produced relative to their spelling in the text. Your child is likely to make changes in articulation of the sounds in these words in later retellings of the story.

Provide similar feedback for your child's sound approximations. Refer to the spelling of the word and the differences between the child's production and your production. If your child produces the word *red* as *wed*, point to the letter *r* and say, "This letter tells me that the word starts with the sound /r/. I have to lift up the front of my tongue to say that sound, like when I say 'red'." Emphasize your production of this word and point to your tongue as it moves. If your child produces a stop consonant such as /p/ instead of fricatives such as /f/, talk about how the word contains the letter *f*, and that means that you have to make a long, hissy noise at the lips. Show how you make this noise in a prolonged /f/ sound.