

Ideas and Games for Oral Motor Development and Awareness:

It is inconclusive whether doing oral motor exercises helps with first sound productions, but it is very fun to play with your mouth to make different sounds. Playing oral motor games *may* develop oral function and awareness. When children are tongue-tied (the frenulum under the tongue is shortened causing decreased mobility), these exercises may increase the range of motion. No matter the outcome, have fun with these suggestions.

1. Have the child push their tongue on the inside of each cheek and you push against it from the outside. Have them apply pressure from the inside.
2. Have the child stick out their tongue and puff up their cheeks (to maintain intra-oral air pressure).
3. Take turns blowing a ping pong ball, tissue, feather or other light object across a table or into a goal. Try blowing it through a straw. Keep points.
4. Stick peanut butter or other desirable sticky substance on the lips or around the lips and have the child follow your lead with a tongue depressor around the mouth.
5. Have the child push up with the tongue tip pushing against a tongue depressor toward the nose.
6. Do the same as number 5, but pointing the tongue down toward the chin. Present resistance for both of these exercises to help strengthen the tongue.
7. Have the child wag the tongue side to side outside the mouth, increasing in speed and accuracy.
8. Have the child stick their tongue out as far as they can. See if it can increase day by day.
9. Have the child practice saying specific sounds repeatedly and with increasing speed. For example, la-la-la-la-la, ma-ma-ma-ma-ma, nee-nee-nee-nee-nee-nee, o-o-o-o-o-o-o, etc.
10. Have the child make different facial expressions that you must then copy and vice versa.
11. BLOW BUBBLES GALORE! – Try in the bathtub with a straw.
12. Lie on the floor together and make 'kuh-kuh-kuh' or 'guh-guh-guh' sounds. Gravity pulls the tongue to the back of the mouth for these sound productions.
13. Drink different thickness liquids through straws, from water to yogurt.
14. Drink liquids through a long straw – try a long twisting straw!
15. Blow into party favors to produce different actions.

More Suggestions: Provide a model first performing the exercises on yourself or another person in the room. Once he is comfortable having these exercises performed on him, he may wish to do the same to you. Be careful and stress gentleness.

Do the exercises in front of a mirror whenever possible.

Let other trusted persons join in the fun to support and generalize the skills.

HAVE FUN!

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