

About Lisp
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Here's a little bit about lisping and why it shouldn't be a major concern before about seven years of age, which is late first to early second grade. Children typically begin losing their teeth between 6 – 8 years; the bottom front central teeth followed by the top front central teeth. When those teeth are missing, a large gap is left behind – a famous time for snapping photos. But with that gap, there is nothing blocking the tongue from bursting out of the mouth. Many speech productions rely on those teeth for clear productions. So, if a child receives speech therapy to correct a lisp prior to losing these teeth, it is likely they will need to repeat therapy after the permanent front teeth arrive. Two times through therapy, though not unheard of, may not be fun for anyone. For better success, wait and let nature take its course.

Please understand that there are various successful ways to create a clear /s/. Listen carefully to adults. There is wide variety in /s/ productions. A young child will also make numerous creations as they learn. So, the best option to guide a child or student to clear production is to enlist the expertise of a speech-language pathologist (SLP). The SLP has several years of educational knowledge and practical experience working with a variety of articulation issues. They know best how to help individual clients. In the meantime, here are some considerations.

Typically to make a clear /s/ sound, the tongue tip is gently placed against the top (or bottom in some cases) front teeth making a slightly curved U-shape. Air is passed forward through the small gap created by the U-shape. The tongue should not protrude out of the mouth as this will produce a “th” sound – the invasive lisp. Also, air should not flow over the sides of the tongue as this will produce the lateral lisp or sloppy /s/ of famous cartoon characters, Daffy Duck and Sylvester Cat.

Of important note: The /s/ sound is difficult to learn. It is one of the most used sounds in English. And what precedes or follows it, affects production. Consider that /s/ blends (E.g., st, sp, sl) are later to develop because of their increased complexity. This is due to the mouth posture changing rapidly between /s/ and the next consonant. Blends may not be perfected until after seven years or late first grade. These factors influence how long it takes to perfect /s/. This is not cause for concern as much as an important reminder.

At first, note that carefully stressed models are typically a gentler approach than continual direct correcting. Present clear corrections to mistakes but try not to force repeats. Children will listen!

All I want for Chrithmath is my two front teeth!

Ideas to Support Correcting Lisper

- ❖ Direct child to keep their tongue inside, behind their closed teeth.
- ❖ The tongue should dip slightly while touching the molars on both sides. Air should pass out the front of the mouth.
- ❖ First practice the sound in isolation...sssss.
- ❖ Then practice saying one-syllable words that begin with /s/.
- ❖ Practice saying several words beginning with /s/ in a row – E.g., soup – silly – seal – Sam – soap – sand.
- ❖ Practice saying short, silly sayings, like the old saying “Sally sells seashells down by the seashore.” Make them up and make it fun.
- ❖ It’s important to wait until the child is fully stable and consistent at good production before correcting in conversation. Consider doing this carefully alone with the adult at first. Establishing a mutually agreed upon gesture or facial expression reminder can be helpful. Later, use that reminder in public. Others will be unaware. It’s hidden and less embarrassing.

Practice – practice – practice.

It’s all in the practice!

*The more – the better and
quicker to full success.*

