

Steps to More Clear Speech

Kathleen Ross, MS, SLP, ECE

1. Before starting to work on mouth posturing, be certain the child hears the accurate target sound.
2. Describe and show the child a correct mouth posture to produce a target sound. A drawing or photo may help.
3. Produce the sound in isolation together a few times, before having the child do it alone.
4. Present a list, items or pictures representing at least ten words with the target sound in the initial position. E.g., *cow, cub, can* (for initial /k/ sound). After labeling, have the child label to be sure they know them. Bonus: This can be a good exercise in increasing vocabulary knowledge. Note: Some children may need to begin with a consonant-vowel (CV) structure vs. actual words. But getting to words quickly creates meaningful utterances that will help remembering.
5. Upon success of isolated words, put them into short sentences created by both participants. Again, the meaningfulness supports remembering. Practice often while creating new sentences.
6. Next present words with the target sound in the final position in words. E.g., *rock, bike, hawk*. Give plenty of time to practice, repeating steps 4-5 above.
7. At this point, it should be comfortable for the child to be gently and respectfully corrected in conversational speech, for the target sound in initial and final positions in words in sentences.
8. Once the target sound is well-established in the initial and final positions in words in sentences and beginning to be accurate in conversation, move on to the target sound in the middle position in words. E.g., “*monkey*.” Again, give plenty of practice time repeating steps 4-5 above.
9. The final position is working on the target sound in blends, such as *kl, kr*, etc. Breaking apart blends into their individual components is helpful. For example, if the difficulty is with “*kr*” blend, first produce /k/, then add an elongated /r/ and the rest of a word. Try “*krrrr-ate*” for “*crate*.” Repeat often, then gradually decrease the space between the two sounds. Work through steps 4-5 again, and practice often, working toward the sentence level.
10. The ultimate goal is to produce accurate target sounds in conversational speech, having the child self-correct, and generalizing the use of the sound in various situations with various people. It should become automatic with no need for hesitation or thinking before producing.

Something to consider: The steps above are for typical situations or how most children will learn new speech sounds. But some children may have success with the target sound in the final position of words initially. Go with the flow. It is often best to guide a child through their successes first, carefully adapting to the more difficult skill or method.

Patience and lots of practice are the key to success.

