

Hearing the Difference Between Sounds

Why is it important to hear the difference between sounds?

The first step of speech sound therapy is to learn to hear the difference between sounds. Children need to be able to hear that every sound is different before we can expect them to use new sounds.

Introducing the pictures

Before you start, you need to make sure your child can recognise the sound pictures. Show them to your child individually and make the sound (with the action if appropriate) so that they learn which picture goes with which sound and which action. For future sessions, ask if your child remembers which one is which. Be careful to say the speech sound (e.g. 's') and not the letter sound (e.g. 'ess').

The 3 stages

We work on sound awareness (hearing the difference between sounds) in 3 stages:

- 1) **Hearing the difference between sounds on their own** - you say one of the sounds and your child has to listen and find the matching sound picture.
- 2) **Hearing the difference when the sound is before/after a vowel** – you say one of the sounds with a vowel before/after it. For example, if your child is working on the 'p' sound, you might say 'eep' or 'pee'. Remind your child to listen for the sound at the beginning or end (your child's Therapist will tell you which to work on). Your child has to find the sound picture for the sound they heard.
- 3) **Hearing the difference when the sound is at the beginning/end of a real word** – use the pictures provided by your child's therapist. You say a word and your child has to find the sound picture for the sound they heard at the beginning/end of the word.

Start with using 2 sounds at a time. Gradually add new sounds as your child starts to find this easier.

Only move on to the next stage when your child can get 8/10 answers correct on 3 different occasions.

Activity Ideas

- Run - stick the sound pictures on the wall. Your child has to run to the sound they hear.
- Throw – put the sound pictures on the floor. Your child throws a beanbag to the sound they hear.
- Jump – lay the sound pictures on the floor and jump on the sound you hear.
- Drive – lay the sound pictures on the floor and drive a toy car to the sound you hear.
- Post – make a post-box (you could use a cereal box) for each sound you are working on. Place Your child posts the picture into the correct post-box.
- Tower – lay out the sound pictures with one brick on each picture. Give your child a pile of bricks. Your child adds another brick to the sound they hear.
- Skittles - put a line of skittles next to each of the sound cards. Your child knocks a skittle down from the line that matches the sound they hear.
- Games – find a game with lots of pieces (e.g. Monkey Business, Pop-up Pirate). Split the pieces between the sounds and take a piece from the sound you hear.

Making it easier

If your child is finding the activities difficult, try using the action cue when you say the sound. This will give your child a visual clue.

You could also reduce the number of sounds you are working on, so your child is only listening for 2 different sounds.