

Information for Families: Encouraging Speech Development in Children with Phonological Delay



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Self-corrections

As adult speakers we constantly make little mistakes when we talk, and then quickly correct them, almost without noticing. This process of self-monitoring and self-correcting is called making revisions and repairs.

Children with phonological disorders are usually not very good "self-correctors", partly because it is hard for them to self-monitor their speech.

The following strategies and activities can be used in order to encourage the development of self-monitoring and the ability to make revisions and repairs.

Talk about making mistakes and "fixing them"

For example: You might say to your child, "If I said 'yam' when I should have said 'lamb', I would have to fix it up. So if I said, 'Mary had a little yam', I would have to fix it up and say, 'Mary had a little lamb'".

Model self-corrections

For example: You might say to your child, "It is too wet to mow the yawn...uh oh...I mean 'lawn'. That was a fixed-up-one. First I said 'yawn' and then I quickly fixed it up and said 'lawn'. Too wet to mow the lawn".

Reinforce self-corrections

Do this by drawing attention to them and commenting when they are made spontaneously (i.e., without adult prompting). For example: You could say to your child, "That was a good fixed-up-one. First you said 'tar', and then you fixed it up all by yourself and said 'car'. The best thing was that you reminded yourself!"

Use labelled praise

When you use labelled praise, be very precise about what you are praising. For example: Making very specific comments such as, 'I like the way you said 'shoe' with a good 'sh' in it' will be more powerful reinforcers than general comments such as, 'You said that nicely'. Labelled praise can be used for reinforcing clear speech attempts, and to encourage children to make spontaneous revisions and repairs. Labelled praise can be used also when the child makes an improved attempt at pronouncing a word: For example:

Adult: What colour is that?

Child: Bat.

Adult: Mmm?

Child: Berlat.

Adult: That sounded more like black. I like the way you fixed it up.

Talk about ‘making sense’ when we talk

As opportunities arise, talk about words, and the need to say the right word so that people know what we mean. For example: You could say to your child, "You couldn't say, 'I eat my dinner with a walk', could you? People would get mixed up if I said that. I really should say, 'eat it with a fork'".

Explain why the 'fixed-up-ones' are important

For example: You could say to your child, 'When you do a fixed-up-one all by yourself it means that you are learning to remind yourself to make your words sound right just like I have to when I make a mistake myself'.

Make modelling corrections in conversation

Modelling is simply giving a clear example with no additional instructions, explanations or demands. When you notice a deviation from the normal pattern (e.g., using the wrong sound or omitting a sound) involving a sound pattern being worked on in therapy, repeat the word correctly yourself, once, twice or three times in the context of the conversation. For example:

Child: That's a tunny one.

Adult: Yes, a very funny one. A funny, funny one.

When making modelling corrections, remember:

1. Not to distort the sound or word by over-emphasising it. It is better to draw the sound or word to the child's attention by saying it repeatedly.
 2. Not to ask the child to repeat the word back to you correctly. All you have to do is say the word clearly yourself several times, in a way the child will notice (e.g., as part of a conversation that you are both enjoying).
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References

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