

Improving Children's Awareness of Sounds

Children with speech sound difficulties often find it difficult to **hear the difference** between sounds. They need to practise this skill before they will use the sound correctly. Your therapist will advise you which sounds to try.

How you can help:

	1	Choose 2 sounds, the one you want them to use (target) and the one they use instead (substitution). So if your child says 'dock' for 'sock' choose 'd and s'. Use letter cards (or Jolly phonics cards) for the two sounds. Make sure your child knows which sound goes with which letter!
	2	Listening for sounds by themselves. Say one of the sounds for your child eg 's' and encourage them to point to the correct card. You can slightly stress the sound if it helps but don't add a 'uh' to the sound eg. 'ssss' not 'suh'. Remember to praise their attempt. You can reward correct attempts by scoring points, winning bricks, having a turn at a game – there are lots of ideas below! Repeat this swapping the sounds around eg 's,d,d,s,d,s,s'
	3	When your child can easily manage single sounds try making it harder by using the sound at the start of little words eg. 'see, door, sue, dear' Remember to mix up the order you do the sounds and praise them having a go..
	4	When your child can hear the sound in little words, make it even harder by saying longer words eg. 'sack, dog, soap, dip'. Remember the longer the word the harder it is for them to hear the sound at the start!
	5	When your child can do all of the above consistently, you can try silent sorting. Ask your child to 'zip up' their mouth and you do the same – no more talking just thinking!. Give them a picture that starts with one of their sounds. Can they think the word in their head and decide which sound card it needs to go on? Remember this is very tricky and you may need to go back to earlier stages to practise a little more.

When your child can manage stages 4 and 5 you can start to encourage them to try and use the sound in their own speech. Model the word correctly for them, slightly stressing the sound eg. 'It's very Sssunny today' If they have a go at the sound that's great, if not don't worry. All of these stages can be used for sounds at the ends of words too if those are tricky!

Ideas for games

Build a tower on each letter – adding a brick when you hear that sound

Posting pictures into labelled boxes according to the sound they can hear

Make two monsters and label with the two sounds. Your child 'feeds' the picture to the right monster!

Complete an easy puzzle – giving them a piece each time they find the right sound

Pop up Pirate or similar – put half the swords on one sound and half on the other. They have to listen and decide which pile they have to pick up from

Make a fishing game with a magnet on a string and paperclips on pictures. 'Catch' a picture and decide which sound it should go on

Play a shopping game – sort items into different shops according to which sound they start with eg. a 's' shop only sells things that start with 's'. Then encourage them to practise their talking when they come and 'buy' things from the shop!

Label two skittles with the sounds they are listening for and they knock over the one they hear