



Speech Sound Development and Your Child

★ **Speech Intelligibility:**

Intelligibility is the percentage your child is understood by both familiar (i.e., people your child interacts with daily or weekly) and unfamiliar listeners (i.e., people your child meets for the first time or does not interact with your child often).

**Below are guidelines as to how much a child should be understood by an unfamiliar listener:**

- 2 years: ~50%
- 3 years: ~75%
- 4 years: ~80-90%
- 5 years: ~90+%

★ **Articulation:**

Articulation is a fancy word for speech sound production. We use guidelines to determine whether speech sound development is on track. The mastery of sounds differs from child to child because there is a range in which acquisition of sounds is appropriate. For example, speech sound /l/ is typically mastered between ages 6-8, but a child can produce it without error at ages 4-5. Speech therapists may work on later developing sounds at an earlier age in certain situations such as speech intelligibility is significantly affected, or the child is mature for their age with appropriate language skills.

**Below are guidelines as to when speech sounds are mastered in typically developing children:**

- 2-3 years: p, b, m, n, w, h, t, d, k, g, ng (**playing**), y
- 4-5: f, v, s, z, sh, ch, j
- 6-8 years: r, l, voiced and voiceless th (**this, with**), zh (measure)

*\*All sounds should be mastered by age 8-9*

★ **When should you be concerned?**

- If your child shows frustration including: refusing to repeat themselves, refusing to talk, and becoming emotional if they are not understood
- Familiar and unfamiliar listeners continuously ask your child to repeat himself/herself or ask for clarification (i.e., what did you just say?)

**\*\* Remember, these are just guidelines. For an assessment of your child's speech skills, [contact a speech therapist](#) for further information or to set up an evaluation.**