

Learning Links' Tip Sheet

Mouth Movement




To help improve your child's muscle control, it is important to follow your child's interests and make activities relaxing and fun. Praise your child for trying activities and don't worry if they can't complete them. Try to encourage your child to watch your face and remember that they often enjoy watching themselves or others make lip and tongue movements in a mirror.

Here are some general suggestions for mouth movements to help develop muscles used for speech.

1. **Lips** – movement is important for lip sounds m, p, b, w and the long vowels ah, eye, oh, oo, ee.
 - a. Play with bubbles and *pop* them.
 - b. Be a donkey going “ee-aw” exaggerating the lip movements.
 - c. Copy animal sounds such as moo, miaw, woof woof, baa.
 - d. Practice chewing with lips together. You can start this for a short period and then gradually increase it.
 - e. Smile and then frown. Pretend to be happy then sad.

2. **Tongue** – flexibility of the tongue is important for the tongue sounds t, d, l, r, k, g.
 - a. Call your tongue, Mr Snake. Let him come out and move around. Then pull him back inside and close your mouth to keep Mr Snake in his hole.
 - b. Place a small sweet or piece of soft sweet on the tip of the tongue. Let the child draw the tongue carefully back in the mouth without losing the sweet.
 - c. Licking lollipops or ice-creams is fun and good for tongue control. Try holding the lollipop to right and left so that your child must move his/her tongue around to lick it.

- 3. Palate** – The soft palate runs across the top of the mouth down the back of the throat. It moves to close off the mouth area from the nose and allows the child to hold enough air in his/her mouth to produce a good air stream to make sounds such as p and b. Your child also needs to be able to direct a strong stream of air.
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- a. Blowing through a straw, maybe into some coloured water to make bubbles.
 - b. Blowing out candles – ‘p’ is a good sound for this.
 - c. Drinking through a straw. Plastic ones are often better as they can vary in thickness and length, making it easier or more difficult.
 - d. Sucking through a straw to pick up a light tissue paper fish. The air must be held in the mouth to hold the fish on the end of a straw. When the child gets better at this, lift the fish from one place to another; for example, from a drawing of a pond to a drawing of a fish tank.
 - e. Play with party blowers. These vary from easier to more difficult.



The information in Learning Links' Tip Sheets is prepared by experienced early childhood professionals. Each child is unique and this material is not necessarily suitable for every child, parent or carer. We recommend you discuss this information with your child's therapist or education professional prior to using these tips.