

Developing an At-Home Speech Practice Habit

A habit is a routine or behavior that is performed regularly and often automatically.

The goal is to make speech practice at home a habit so that the child's new way of correctly producing speech sounds also becomes a habit!

How to make speech practice at home a habit: (Adapted from Clear, James. 2018. *Atomic Habits*. New York: Penguin Random House LLC):

- Make an implementation intention, which is a plan made beforehand about when and where to act. It can be based on time or a current habit/activity.
 - For example, an implementation intention based on time would be, "I [child] will say my target sound correctly in 50 words at 8:00am at the kitchen table."
 - Implementation intentions based on a current habit/activity would be, "I [child] will say my target sound correctly in 50 words after I eat breakfast." Or, "I [child] will say my target sound correctly in 50 words before I play video games."
- Make the child's speech practice materials visible in the location where the child will practice. For example, put them on top of the child's electronic device or at the child's place on the kitchen table.
- Practicing speech may be more attractive to the child if he or she can do something they want to do after they are finished – for example, going outside, listening to music, playing a game.
- If the child is resistant to practice, start small, with a number of words that is easy for the child to do, such as 10. Practice that number of words each day for a week and then increase the number of words by 5 to 10 for the next week. Continue adding until the child is producing his or her target sound correctly in 50 to 100 words each day.
- Tracking how often the child completes speech practice may be motivating. For example, placing an X on a calendar for each day the child practiced, earning a token (e.g., penny, paper clip) for each day of practice, or keeping a tally of how many words have been correctly practiced. When a certain level of practice is reached, the child could earn a treat (e.g., outing, new book, ice cream).

What to practice:

- Words sent home by the child's SLP.
- Words in the child's environment that contain their target sounds (e.g., family member names; pet names; preferred activities, toys, topics, and/or foods).
- If the child is practicing reading, they can look for words within their books that contain their target sound.
- The child can also put the words into short phrases/sentences such as "my/her/his (word with target sound)" or "I see (word with target sound)."

How to practice:

- Aim for 50 to 100 correct productions of the child's target sounds in words/phrases/sentences each day.
- The list of words/phrases/sentences for a session could vary. A shorter list allows for more repetitions of each word/phrase/sentence. For example, for a 5-word list, each word would be

repeated 20 times to reach 100 trials. For a 10-word list, each word would be repeated 10 times to reach 100.

- Present the words/phrases/sentences randomly in a changing order, having the child say each word one time before going on to the next word until the child has produced their target sound correctly in 50 to 100 words.
- If the child makes a mistake on their target sound, stop them and have them repeat the word again correctly. Only count correct productions toward the child's goal of 50 to 100 words.
- The child could also vary his/her intonation while practicing. For example, saying some words/phrases as questions or exclamations.

Question: My child says his/her target sound correctly during at-home speech practice time but not during conversation. Should I correct him/her?

No one likes to be corrected all the time! It is recommended to limit correcting your child's speech to "speech practice time."

Another option is the following strategy from Bowen, C. (2011). *Information for Families: Encouraging speech development in children with speech sound disorders*. Retrieved from <http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/> on 6/3/22.

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 [sic] 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. [Simply] 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).