

How Children Learn To Talk Clearly

- Is my child delayed?
 - No two children are alike. Children learn to sit, crawl, and walk at different ages and in different ways.
 - In the same way, we know early talkers and late talkers and some children who did not say one sound until they were three years old. We also know that often, these children had no need for speech therapy.
- When should you be concerned about your child's speech?
 - When you or others have a lot of trouble understanding what your child is trying to say.
 - If your child is getting frustrated because this can affect his desire to interact with others and impact his social development.
- What do Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) do?
 - SLPs listen to a child speak and determine whether the child is having trouble with pronouncing speech sounds or not.
 - Many things are taken into consideration: 1) Are these siblings, 2) Does the child spend a lot of time playing alone, 3) Is the child exposed to books or different places regularly, and 4) Are there other problems, like repeated ear infections.
- It has been shown that children do have similar patterns of development, as far as learning to talk goes. Children learn to make easier sounds before harder sounds. So they are more likely to make sounds that are easy to see, like those made with the lips (e.g., b), than sounds that are made with subtle tongue changes or inside the mouth (e.g., r). This has been found to be true for all children. SLPs and researchers have documented these facts in other languages as well.
- Here is a list of sounds that we expect 90% of children to produce fairly accurately by 2 ½ years: p, h, b, m, n; by 3 years: f, w, b, g, d, ing (e.g., swing). Sounds that may not become accurate until later include: l, r, th, and y (e.g., yes). It is typical for these sounds not to come in until as late as 8 years of age.

Reference: Handout – "Speech Sounds Acquisition in Young Children" by Schatze Rasmussen (December 7, 1999). Internet: www.suite01.com/print_article.cfm/5634/29689.