IS MY CHILD SPEAKING RIGHT?

A Parent's Guide to Speech Milestones and Clarity



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1. Introduction: Why This Guide Matters

Your child's first words are magical. But what if, by age 3 or 4, those words aren't clear? This guide is created to help you understand whether your child is on track with speech development, what you can do at home, and when it might be time to seek expert help.

2. Speech vs Language – What's the Difference

Speech is how we produce sounds: clear pronunciation, fluency, and voice.
Language is how we use words and sentences to express and understand.

A child can have good language skills but unclear speech, and vice versa.

3. Speech Milestones by Age (2 to 6 Years)

Age 2:
- Uses 50+ words
- Combines 2 words ("mama come")
- May be hard to understand by others

Age 3:
- 3-4 word sentences
- Can be understood ~50-75% of the time
- Some articulation errors are still normal

Age 4:
- 4+ word sentences
- Most speech is understandable to unfamiliar adults
- Sounds like k, g, t, d, f, y should be correct

Age 5-6:
- Clear speech with most sounds correct
- Can tell stories clearly
- Blends and tricky sounds may still be developing

4. Types of Speech Sound Errors

- Substitution: 'wabbit' for 'rabbit'
- Omission: 'ca' instead of 'cat'
- Distortion: unclear /s/ or /r/
- Addition: 'buh-lue' for 'blue'

5. Simple At-Home Speech Clarity Checklist

- Can strangers understand them?
- Are they frustrated when not understood?
- Do they avoid certain sounds/words?
- Can they imitate correct sounds?
- Do they talk less in groups?

6. What Causes Speech Sound Errors

- Delayed speech milestones
- Oral motor weakness
- Hearing issues
- Limited speech models at home
- Developmental conditions like Autism, Apraxia

7. When Should You Worry? Red Flags

- Child is 3+ and still unintelligible
- Repeated substitutions
- Difficulty imitating sounds
- Limited variety of sounds
- Frustration or behavioral issues

8. Activities to Support Clear Speech at Home

- Sound Play: Make silly sounds (pa, ba, ta, ka)
- Mirror Talk: Watch your mouth move
- Read Aloud: Repetitive sound books
- Sing Songs: Rhymes aid fluency
- Picture Naming: Identify household items

9. Common Myths Around Speech Delays

- 'They will grow out of it.' Not always true.
- 'Boys talk late.' No scientific backing.
- 'Bilingualism causes delays.' Only if both languages aren't supported.

10. When and Where to Seek Help

Consult a Speech and Language Therapist if concerned.
Start with a speech screening or full assessment.
Don’t wait past age 4 if clarity is still poor.

11. Therapy Options: What to Expect

- Articulation Therapy
- Oral Motor Exercises
- Play-Based Therapy
- Parent Involvement

Some kids need a few months; others may need longer depending on severity.

12. Final Words and Encouragement for Parents

You are your child's best teacher. Trust your instincts. Celebrate every sound, every effort, and don’t hesitate to reach out for help. Early support makes a world of difference.

13. Bonus: 1-Page Speech Sound Checklist

Speech Sound Checklist by Age

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Use this printable checklist to track which speech sounds your child can produce clearly. This guide helps you identify age-appropriate milestones and discuss progress with a therapist.

Age	Sounds Typically Mastered	Can My Child Say This? (Yes/No)	Notes
2 Years	p, b, m, h, n, w		
3 Years	k, g, t, d, ng		
4 Years	f, y		
5 Years	v, s, z, sh, ch		
6 Years	l, j, th, r, blends (sp, bl, tr)		