Speech Therapy Mirrors

INCLU110

Set contains:
1 Large mirror that student can observe self and teacher/therapist simultaneously.
24 small mirrors, for use by individual student in class or at home.

These notes can be photocopied and sent home with the student if practice at home is desirable.

Addressing Speech Difficulties During Reading Instruction. Tips for Helping a Child Pronounce Specific Sounds

Some students have limitations in their ability to say or pronounce certain sounds. These are speech development issues, not reading issues. This is where the student, for various reasons, is not saying specific sounds correctly. Some of these children have physical limitations and others are physically capable but just have not learned to say certain sounds automatically. There is also a normal expected progression of speech development related to age. If a student has a speech difficulty, talk with a speech pathologist for specific recommendations.

If a student is facing speech difficulties they need to be evaluated by a professional. Most schools have screening processes and speech specialists who help identify and assist students with speech difficulties or recommend necessary assistance. Background information on speech development issues can be found on the internet. http://www.speechteach.co.uk A web site for parents and professionals supporting children with speech difficulties

Reading instruction does not replace the need for speech assistance. However, the individual attention and work on specific sounds provides an opportunity to supplement and assist students. As you work on specific sounds both in isolation and with reading words, you can sometimes help the student learn and practice correct pronunciation. Obviously this informal work on sounds is most helpful for students who do not have physical limitations and just need to learn how to make the sound. When you are working with a student with speech difficulties, the best option is to talk with the speech specialist for recommendations to help the individual student. These specialists can usually provide specific tips for the student’s unique situation.
The following list shares some general information and tips that a parent, teacher or reading tutor may be able to use to help a student say specific sounds. However, these informal tips should never replace consultation with a professional.

General Information and Suggestions for Speech Instruction:

- Use the large mirror to sit alongside the student so the student can ‘see’ how they are making the sound. For example, to make the /th/ sound the student needs to ‘stick out’ their tongue. With the mirror, the child can see the correct position. The phrase ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ or in this case ‘a reflection is worth a thousand words’ applies to speech instruction. The small hand mirror is an effective tool for them to practise with by themselves.

- By sitting alongside the student and making sure they are looking at yours and their reflections and can see your lips move as you say specific sounds. By looking carefully the student can sometimes ‘see’ the difference between sounds. For example, it is difficult to hear the difference between /f/ and the soft /th/. That is why many children say “It is time for a /baf/” instead of the correct /bath/. However, by looking at the lips you can ‘see’ the difference between the ‘tongue sticking out’ for soft /th/ and the teeth on the bottom lips for /f/. If the student is looking at you he can see the difference between certain sounds.

- You can use the ‘feel’ of the sounds to help children distinguish and say specific sounds. This is helpful for distinguishing some of the sounds with vibrations (such as /v/, hard /th/, /z/) and those with ‘puffs’ of air (such as /h/, /p/), and the voice on-voice off differences that can be felt in the Adam's apple area between the similar ‘sister sounds’ (such as /t/ & /d/ or /p/ & /b/).

- There are specific ‘sister sounds’ that have the same formation. The only difference is one sound is ‘voice off’ and the other is ‘voice on’. With the closely related sounds you can feel the difference between ‘voice off’ and ‘voice on’ by touching the Adam's apple area. These closely related ‘sibling’ or ‘sister’ sounds include: /s/-/z/, /t/-/d/, /f/-/v/, /th/-/th/, /p/-/b/, /k/-/g/, /ch/-/j/. Sometimes it helps to tell the child the ‘voice off’ sounds are the ‘soft’ sounds.

- Demonstrate to the student! Show the student how to make the sound. Let them listen, look and feel the differences between sounds. When necessary, exaggerate specific elements of position.

- There is a progression of difficulty in making specific sounds. Some sounds are more difficult to make. Talk to your speech specialist for specific details. In general the sounds /k/, /g/, /ch/, /j/, /th/ /sh/ /r/ /l/ /y/ /s/ blends and /l/ blends may be more difficult.
Tips and Suggestions for Helping a Child or Student Say Specific Sounds:

- **/s/ and /z/:** “Keep the tiger in the cage”. Both these sounds are made by keeping the tongue inside/behind the teeth. Demonstrate by showing the student how your tongue (the tiger) is inside the teeth (cage) when you say /s/. Let him try using the mirror to check his tongue position. The /s/ and /z/ are ‘sister sounds’ made with the same tongue/mouth position. However the /s/ is ‘voice off’ and the /z/ is ‘voice on’. Teach the student to make /s/, and then tell them to say /z/ ‘make the tiger rattle the cage’. The /z/ sound is a vibration, ‘voice on’ sound. The student can feel the difference in the Adam’s apple and also in vibration on the tongue/teeth.

- **/th/ and /th/:** “Stick your tongue out!” For both the hard /th/ and the soft /th/ sound the student needs to stick their tongue out. Exaggerate sticking the tongue out to teach the sound. A mirror is particularly helpful so the student can see their tongue sticking out between the teeth. Both the /th/ and /th/ sounds are made by sticking the tongue out. The only difference is the ‘voice on’ ‘voice off’. With the hard /th/ the student vibrates the tongue. You can feel the vibrations ‘tickle the tongue’. With the soft /th/, the ‘voice off’ makes the quiet /th/ that does not tickle the tongue. The student can feel the difference on their tongue and also by touching their Adam’s apple area.

- **/t/ and /d/:** The /t/ sound is made by ‘tapping’ the tongue on the roof of the mouth right behind the top of the teeth. Teach /t/ as a fast ‘tapping’ sound. Demonstrate and let the student use a mirror to see the tongue tapping. The /d/ is made the same as /t/ except for it has ‘voice on’. The student can feel the difference by touching their Adam’s apple area. Also remember both of these sounds are ‘fast’ sounds that must be said quickly. If you say slowly you distort the sound. The /d/ and /t/ are difficult for some students to orally distinguish. The phonemic awareness of the ‘fast’ sounds is particularly difficult when they are blended with other consonants.

- **/k/ and /g/:** These are both ‘back’ sounds made with the back of the tongue almost pulled back to the throat. /k/ and /g/ are also both ‘fast’ sounds that must be said quickly. The /k/ is made with the ‘voice off’ and the /g/ is made with the ‘voice on’. The student can feel the difference on their Adam’s apple.

- **/r/:** The /r/ sound is difficult for many students. The /r/ is made by having the tongue curl up with lips apart. (If the lips are together the sound is /w/). The /r/ is a ‘lift’ sound where the tongue is lifted up. A mirror is helpful for teaching this sound. For speech you can exaggerate the /r/ to /er/. To say /r/ for reading have the student start to say a word such as ‘run’ or ‘race’ slowly /rrrrrun/ and then have them cut off at the /rrr/. The /r/ is a tricky sound!

- **/ch/ and /j/:** The /ch/ is an ‘explosive’ sound. Start in the /t/ position (tongue up touching the roof of the mouth right behind the front teeth). Have the student drop their jaw as they blow out. Demonstrate and teach with an
exaggerated jaw drop. Also, thanks to a little boy I worked with who loved to watch his dad chop wood, I came up with a helpful analogy. Chopping wood can effectively explain how to make this sound. An analogy between the quick force of an raised ax falling to chop the wood compares to the quick force of the tongue dropping to make the /ch/ sound /ch/ /ch/ - raise the ax (tongue) and /ch/ ‘chop’ (drop quickly). Also if the student has difficulty saying the /ch/ sound, start practicing with ‘nch’ blend words such as ‘lunch’, ‘pinch’, ‘ranch’ as the tongue is already raised for the /n/ sound so the /ch/ is then easier to say correctly. The /j/ is the ‘voice on’ sister sound for /ch/. The student can feel the /j/ in the Adam’s apple area.

- /p/ and /b/: The /p/ is ‘popping popcorn’. The /p/ is a quick sound made by ‘popping’ the lips together just like popcorn popping. The student can also feel the air puff at each ‘pop’. Once again this is a ‘fast’ sound that must be said quickly. Demonstrate and use a mirror to help the student see how to make the /p/. The /b/ is the ‘sister sound’ made with ‘voice on’ that can be felt in the Adam’s apple area. Both sounds are said ‘quickly’ with the lips and puff of air.

- /l/: The /l/ is a ‘lift’ sound that is made by lifting the tongue up behind the teeth. Exaggerate and have the student curl their tongue up, placing the tip behind the front teeth (in the /l/ position). Make sure they keep the tip of their tongue up behind/inside the teeth. Demonstrate and then have the student use a mirror to ‘see’ the position.

- /f/ and /v/: These sounds are made by the top teeth resting on the bottom lip and blowing. Exaggerate to teach how to make the sound. Demonstrate and use the mirror. The student can see the top teeth on the bottom lip. The /f/ sound is the soft sound of gently blowing. The /v/ sound is the ‘voice on’ sister sound. The /v/ is the ‘vibration’ sound (/v/=vibration). The student can feel the vibrations on the lower lip as well as feel the ‘voice on’ in the Adam’s apple area. Also note that the phonemic awareness between /f//v/ and soft /th/ is often difficult for younger children. (Why children say ‘baf’ for bath, ‘haf’ for have and cute sayings like “My mom is a votographer’) Help them develop an ‘ear’ for the difference by having them look at the formation differences as they hear the sounds.

- /sH/: This is the ‘quiet’ /sh/ sound. The student needs to keep their teeth together and lips rounded as they blow the air out. Demonstrate and use a mirror. The standard ‘quiet’ /sh/ symbol can help, except drop your finger slightly lower towards the chin so they can see the teeth together and rounded lips.

- /h/: The /h/ can be a tricky sound to make. Have the student feel the ‘hot’ puff of air on their hand. This is a ‘fast’ sound that must be said quickly. Also make sure they say the sound quietly as /h/ is a ‘voice off’ soft sound.

Remember, speech difficulties (difficulty saying a certain sound) are NOT considered reading errors. When reading with a student who has a speech
difficulty, inability to say a sound or mispronunciation due to a speech difficulty is NOT a reading error. If the student correctly identifies and attempts to say the Sound, don't correct mispronunciation as a reading error. To help the child learn proper pronunciation, the instructor should repeat the word pronounced correctly and help the student practice how to correctly make the sound but do not consider it ‘incorrect’ from a reading standpoint. For example: If the student has difficulty pronouncing /r/ and says /stwing/ for ‘string’ the student read the word correctly even though they did not pronounce it correctly. Do not correct these types of pronunciation errors as reading errors. In contrast, if the student misses the /r/ sound altogether and says /sting/ you would stop him and have him re-read the word picking up the ‘r’ even if he mispronounces it.