

## Strategies for Supporting Sound Acquisition at Home

As your child continues to develop speech, there are many things that you can do during everyday conversation at home. These strategies are valuable for all children who are developing sounds.

**1. Provide extra models for your child.** These are also called *conversational recasts*. If speech-language pathologists could only choose one strategy, it would be this one. During conversation, you might hear your child make a substitution for a target sound, such as “wed” for “red.” A conversational recast is saying the word again immediately for the child as a model for a good production. This is not a correction, but rather an extra model that keeps the conversation going. It is not necessary to emphasize the word or sound. It might go something like this:

**Child:** I want the wed one.

**Parent:** Red. (Pause.) What are you going to draw?

It’s helpful to pause after providing the good model as well to allow your child to hear the difference between his/her production and your production. Researchers have found conversational recasts to be effective in teaching new sounds, grammar and sentence structures. When a child is provided with these cues over several weeks (10 – 20 weeks), he or she may start using the correct sound or structure naturally in conversation. Talking with your child about his or her day is a meaningful context for learning new skills and your patient modeling (not correction) can enable him or her to do so. There is no need to emphasize the word or draw out the correct sound. A natural model is very powerful.

**2. Read books that are loaded with the sound(s) or consonant clusters your child needs to acquire.** Researchers have theorized that some children may need to hear more models of particular sounds in order to acquire them. Therefore, families can read books that feature the target sounds and clusters during their daily routines. Please visit the following site for a comprehensive list of books: <http://consonantlyspeaking.com/sites/consonantlyspeaking.com/files/uploads/Books%20That%20Work%20on%20Articulation.pdf>

**3. Model making speech errors and fixing them.** This draws attention to the fact that all speakers make errors and that this affects what someone else understands. This offers further opportunities to provide models of relevant sounds in a playful, supportive manner. Please visit: [http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=72:fuor&catid=9:resources&Itemid=101](http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=72:fuor&catid=9:resources&Itemid=101)

**4. Provide a consistent hand signal to pair with a target sound.** For instance, many students respond well to the hand signal of running a finger down the entire arm to signify the /s/ sound. This visual cue can provide a subtle reminder for a child to use a sound in a variety of situations. It is recommended that as many people as possible use this cue with your child, including family members and teachers. In most cases, it is best for the child to select a hand signal that is meaningful for him or her. Your school’s speech-language pathologist can consult with you if you have any questions.

**5. Take the communicative burden off of your child.** When you cannot understand what he or she says, it is best to say something like “I need help. Please help me understand...” This puts the child in the role of helping you rather than fixing something that was wrong.