Speech Ease

Typical Phonological Development

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When learning to talk, most children will have difficulty pronouncing specific words and sounds correctly. For example, an 18 month old might say “nana” for “banana”, or a 3 year old might say “wabbit” for “rabbit”. This is because they are using a predictable set of patterns to simplify speech as they are learning the rules of a speech- sound system. These patterns are called phonological processes, and they are a normal part of children’s phonological development.

For typically developing children, their speech becomes clearer and more accurate as they grow older.

What is Phonological Delay/Disorder?

A phonological delay/ disorder is a type of Speech Sound Disorder (SSD). It occurs when a child is using phonological processes that are either ‘atypical’ (i.e., do not follow typical development patterns) or are no longer age appropriate.

For example, a 5 year old child saying “tar” for “car” is no longer considered age appropriate. In this case, the 5 year old child can be described as having a phonological delay.

Process	Description	Examples	Resolve by:
Voicing	A voiceless sound (quiet) is replaced by a voiced sound (louder).	pik/ → pig	3;0
Assimilation	One sound is substituted with another within the context of a word.	Kakie → Katie	3;0
Final Consonant Deletion	The final sound in the word is left out.	do→ doll	3;3
Velar Fronting	Sound originally made in the back of the mouth is replaced with a sound made in the front of the mouth.	tar → car	3;6
Palatal Fronting	Fricative sounds (e.g., ‘sh’) are replaced by fricatives that are made further forward in the mouth towards the front teeth (sh → s).	sip → ship	3;6
Weak Syllable Deletion	Syllables are either stressed (i.e., emphasised) or unstressed.	mato → tomato	4;0
Cluster Reduction	When a consonant cluster (i.e.,two or more sounds occurring in a sequence) is reduced to a single sound.	pider→ spider	4;0
Deaffrication	An affricate sound (‘ch’) is replaced with a fricative (e.g., ‘v’) or stop sound (e.g., ‘p’).	chip → dip	4;11
Gliding	Liquid sounds (e.g., ‘l’ or ‘r’) are replaced with a glide (e.g., ‘w’ or ‘j’).	wabbit → rabbit	5;0
Stopping	Fricative (e.g., ‘s’) and/or affricate sounds (e.g., ‘ch’ are replaced with a stop sound.	ban→ van	/f, s/ → 3;0 /v, z/ → 3;6 /sh,ch,dg/ → 4;6 /th/ → 5;0