

ABOUT SPEECH IMPAIRMENT



Speech is when we use the tongue, lips, palate and respiratory system to produce sounds and sequences of sounds (words and sentences). Speech impairment is when there is a delay or disorder that affects a learner's ability to make those sounds.

Each learner with speech impairment is a unique individual and adjustments to their educational program and learning environment should be tailored to their needs. When you understand the impact of speech impairment on the individual learner, you'll be better able to adjust to their needs.



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education

Understanding speech impairment

Speech impairment is broken down into 2 categories, delay and disorder.

- A speech sound delay is when a learner's speech is developing in a normal sequential pattern, but is occurring later than the typical stages of development.
- A speech disorder is when a learner makes sound errors that are not typical (like replacing /k/ with /t/ consistently) or has unusual or inconsistent sound errors or error patterns (like replacing /k/ with a different sound in various words).

Speech sound delays and disorders include problems with articulation (forming and producing specific speech sounds) or phonological processes (sound error patterns). The learner may omit certain sounds in their speech or substitute one sound for another (produce sounds incorrectly). These errors are often obvious and easy to identify.

With speech pathology support, most children with speech impairment will make improvements. If you have a learner that has difficulty producing sounds and it is impacting on your ability to understand them, raise your concerns with your student review team or contact your Student Support Services speech pathologist.

Hearing loss and speech impairment

Children learn to speak by listening to the speech of others. If they have hearing loss or auditory processing disorder, they can't pick up speech consistently and critical sounds might be missed or misinterpreted. This may lead to them developing speech sound errors.

Strengths of learners with speech impairment

The strengths of learners with a speech impairment can be:

- showing persistence even when they are not understood
- adaptability when using gestures or locating an object to help convey their message
- Aboriginal learners will often use visual strategies as part of their communication.

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT ADJUSTMENTS



EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



Collaborating with families and a speech pathologist

- You will need to collaborate with the learner and their family or carers to build a trusting relationship and get to know the learner's strengths, interests, needs, language, culture, developmental level, social understanding and emotional capacity.
- You will work with the speech pathologist to assess any impacts and identify the learner's functional needs.
- The speech pathologist will determine the right treatment for the speech profile and provide recommendations and advice on implementation.



Environmental

- Reduce the amount of background noise in the learning space.
- Provide multiple small group or 1:1 intervention sessions where the learner practices target speech sounds.
- Provide access to technology so the learner can hear proper articulation or make themselves understood by others.



Instructional

- Model and recast errors (where you reinforce the correct articulation by repeating it several times) in conversation throughout the day.
- Look for opportunities to model target sounds across the school day, in particular during small group activities.
- Provide specific feedback for saying sounds correctly. For example say 'Great talking, I heard 2 sounds at the front when you said spot, I heard your /s/ and your /p/.



Teaching and learning materials

- In an assessment situation, focus on content and not articulation errors (as appropriate).
- Reinforce target sounds when reading or being read to.
- Consider providing 1:1 opportunities that embed their target speech sounds. The speech pathologist may have programmed strategies like minimal pairs or multiple opposition therapy that can be used in these sessions.



Focus on Aboriginal learners

Aboriginal languages have different sound systems and language structure to Standard Australian English, for example Pitjantjatjara does not use the /s/ sound. When learning English, learners will be producing this sound for the first time.