

These strategies are useful to use with ALL children, whether their speech is developing normally, is delayed or is disordered.

React to WHAT the child says, not HOW clearly they speak

Children often don't realise that they mispronounce words so correcting them can be confusing. For example, if a child says 'bis' (fish) and an adult says "Did you say 'bis'?" the child is quite likely to reply "No, I said 'bis' not 'BIS'!"

Repeat what the child says but as an adult would say it

Telling a child that they are not saying a word properly and making them repeat it draws unnecessary attention to their speech and can reduce their confidence. Instead, repeat back what they have said the way an adult would say it, emphasising the sound(s) the child mispronounced, for example, child says - "I like weeding dorwies." Adult says - "Yes, reading **st**ories is fun!"

Build confidence

Sometimes children's speech is so unclear that you can't understand what they are saying. It's important to still encourage them to talk and value what they say. Repeat back any words you do understand and encourage them to tell you more. A home - school/nursery contact book might be useful to help you anticipate what a child with speech difficulties might talk about.

Don't pretend to understand

To save embarrassment when we don't understand, our natural reaction is to say something non-committal like 'that's nice' or 'good girl'. Children are very perceptive about this. It's much better to be honest and admit when you don't understand. Be reassuring and try to find a way to solve the problem, e.g. say something like, "My ears aren't working very well" or "Can you show me?"