



Best Tips  
For Speech Practice

## Disclaimer:

*These tips have been designed to support and enhance speech sound development and programming. These tips should not be considered a substitute for the expertise of a registered Speech Language Pathologist.*

*A full assessment with a registered Speech Language Pathologist is always recommended prior to beginning any articulation work.*





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# Welcome

You are about to learn my 20 essential tips for speech practice. Each of these tips will enhance **your child's experience and** help them successfully achieve their speech sounds.

It has been an ongoing quest of mine to identify what specifically I do as a Speech Language Pathologist that makes the most difference to my clients. By applying the Pareto Principle (or the 80/20 rule) to what I do as a Speech Language Pathologist, I have identified what makes the most difference in speech practice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcus Little".

Marcus Little M.Sc.  
SLP Reg. CASLPO Speech Language Pathologist

# Tip #

# 1

## Use a Roadmap

A simple roadmap that shows where to start, finish and how to get there makes all the difference in the world. My experience has taught me that the simpler speech practice is, the more likely it is to get done.

“...the **simpler** speech practice is,  
the more likely it is to get done.”

All speech sounds follow the same path. The path starts with being able to hear the sound correctly. The path ends with being able to use the sound automatically in conversation. A roadmap will help you navigate any decision points along the way.

Conversation

Sentence

Word

Double Syllable

Syllable

Sound

Sound Discrimination

# Tip #

# 2

## Where to Begin

Th, Th, Th,

Can your child say their speech sound on its own?

If they can, great! The ability to say a sound accurately in isolation is your starting point.

“...the ability to say a sound **accurately** in **isolation** is your starting point.”

If your child cannot say a certain speech sound, you may need to work with a Speech Language Pathologist.

For most sounds this can be a quick process. Other times developing accuracy at the sound level can take some time.

If your child **cannot** say a certain speech sound, you may need to work with a Speech Language Pathologist.

# Tip #

# 3

## Know Your End Goal

When you or I speak, our tongue moves rapidly to different points of articulation.

It is an **automatic** process and we **don't think about the** movements.

When children are learning to say a speech sound. They need to think about what is happening in their mouths to say the sound correctly. The end goal of speech practice is for speech sounds to happen automatically in conversation.

“...**end** goal of speech practice is for speech sounds to happen **automatically** in conversation. “

The best way to help these kids is to take what they have to think about and make it automatic. All this takes is practice.

Rapid development of a speech sound is a result of maximizing the number and rate of repetitions. If you want to have a sound become automatic in conversation, learn to practice faster.

# Tip #

# 4

## Model Masterfully

When modeling a sound for your child:



- 1 • Position yourself in front of them so they can easily see your face.
- 2 • Draw their attention by saying:  
**“Eyes are watching and ears are listening.”**
- 3 • Direct their attention to your mouth so they can watch you model the sound correctly.
- 4 • Model the sound slowly and then have them attempt the sound.
- 5 • Always use **positive reinforcement** to let your child know they are on the right track.

Begin modelling sounds slowly. As your child becomes accurate you can start modeling quicker and less often. We want to reduce or drop the modeling of sounds as soon as possible. Modeling is like training wheels. The quicker we can get past it the better.

**“Modeling is like training wheels. The quicker we can get past it the better.”**

# Tip #

# 5

## Accuracy First

Always focus on developing accurate production of speech sounds. Especially when first starting a sound.

Once a sound first becomes accurate, it needs to become consistently accurate. Going slow at first will help. Once the child is able to produce five targets in a row slowly, you need to start pushing the speed.

When training for accuracy:

Model each Production

Emphasize target sounds

Positively reinforce each success

If not accurate, slow down and stretch apart

### Golden Rule:

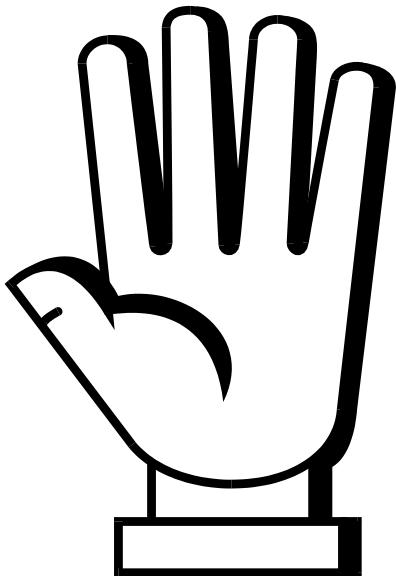
Accuracy first! Develop speed while keeping accuracy.

Keep training for accuracy until 10/10 are correct. At this point you can consider training the sound for speed.

# Tip #

# 6

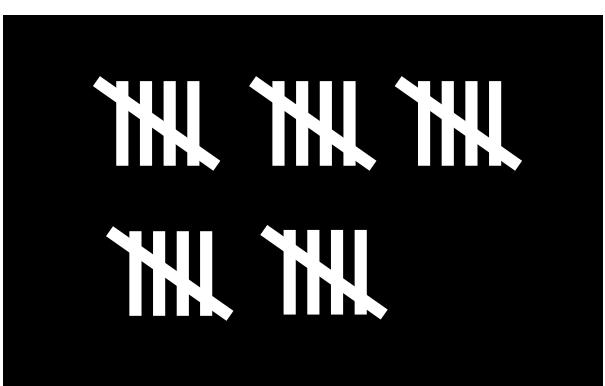
## Strive for Five



If your child is having trouble focusing or getting in a rhythm you can tap out the sets of 5 on their fingers. Do this by having them place their hand flat on the table and tap each finger while counting out the set of 5. Remember to add your rhythm.

Once you are accurate with single productions, start moving towards 5 at a time. Chunking targets into sets of 5 lets us produce and track many more repetitions during a homework session.

It is much easier to have your child count to 20 (sets of 5) then it is to count to one hundred. Develop a rhythm to saying the sets of 5. This will help with counting the sets. It will also help the child get into a flow state where the work is less effortful. This is important!



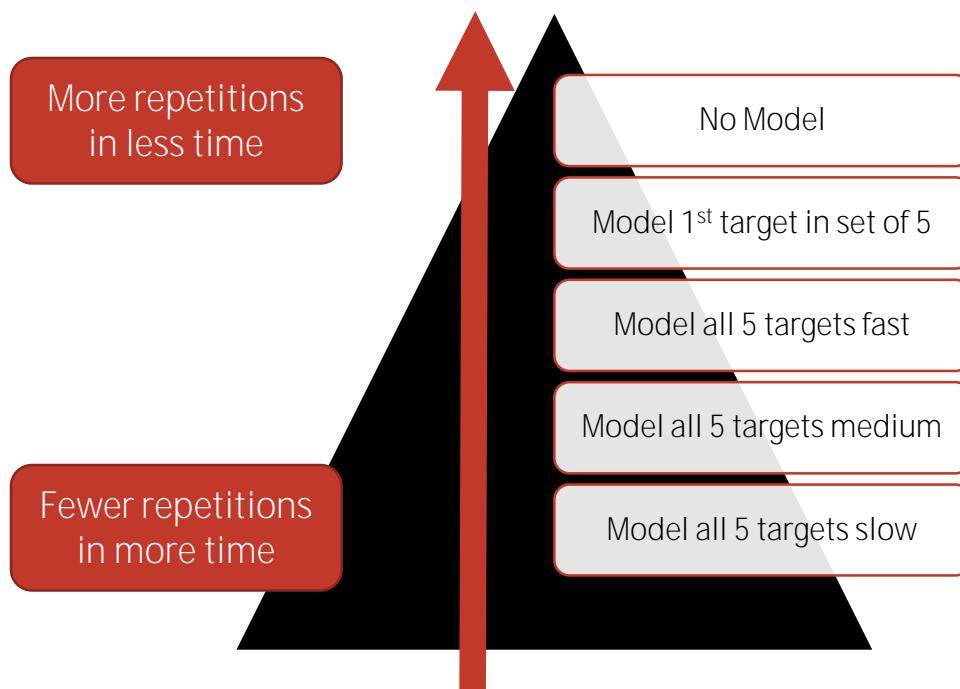
# Tip #

# 7

## Train for Speed

Speech targets need to be accurate and fast. We need to train and prepare the articulators for rapid productions. This is necessary for developing our goal of automatic speech in conversation.

To help this we need to adjust how we are modeling. The diagram below illustrates the progression of our modeling.



Early models are slow. Models will get progressively faster and less frequent. Our goal is to do more reps in a shorter period of time with a minimal amount of modeling.

# Tip #

# 8

## Minimize Corrections



Through experience I have learned I am much more effective when I correct my clients less.

Do you like it when someone is correcting you? Is it comfortable or fun for you? Not likely! Focus on practicing what the child can already do.

The key is to work on developing the speed and smoothness of their target sounds. This will pay big dividends when developing targets into conversation.

Our time in high-repetition therapy is spent practicing what the child can do, and not on corrections. Children enjoy this style of drill work because they are experiencing so much success. The number of repetitions per practice session will sky rocket.

Constantly correcting your child while doing the drills, means you are working at **too high** of a level.

If you find you are correcting frequently, make the drills easier. Slow down to reconnect with accuracy. If needed, drop down a level on your speech roadmap to make the drills easier.

# Tip #

# 9

## More Repetitions in Less Time

Rapid speech progress is the result of optimized work. We want to produce the greatest number of productions in the least amount of time. This has been covered in prior tips and is critical for success so it bears repeating.

**“We want to produce the greatest number of productions in the least amount of time.”**

Improve your ability for maximum productions by becoming expert in the following tips:

3 Know Your End Goal

5 Accuracy First

6 Strive for Five

7 Train for Speed

8 Minimize Corrections

Review these tips regularly. You will be producing more and more repetitions during your sessions. You will be on the fast track to making your speech targets more automatic.

# Tip #

# 10

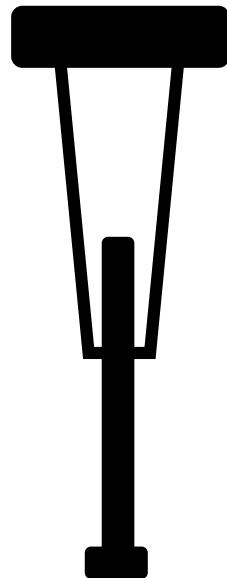
## Purge the Pausing

Getting the sound correct is not enough! We need to monitor how the sound is being produced.

Is it **effortful**, taking much concentration - or is it fluid, effortless and **automatic**?

Many children will add pauses before their target sounds to maintain accuracy. This gives their articulators extra time to position themselves and helps them be accurate. This tells us that sound production is not automatic. Continued development of transition speed will be necessary. Pausing is a crutch that will get in the way and hinder the development of automatic speech.

Watch the face, lips and tongue for effortful productions. Pausing may be associated with these effortful productions.



**“Pausing is a **crutch** that will get in the way and hinder the development of automatic **speech**.”**

# Tip #

# 11

## Eliminate Emphasis

Emphasizing sounds is something all Speech Language Pathologists do. It is essential early in developing the consistency and accuracy of a sound. It is important to manage emphasis though. You need to be aware of when you and your child are using emphasis.

“Emphasis is an **indicator** that the target sound is not **automatic**.”



Emphasis is like a brake. You cannot go fast with it on. To effectively manage emphasis, you need to focus on working on speed. Speed Drills will stop emphasis. Once you are able to do your speech drills rapidly, you will be able to conquer emphasis.

Emphasis needs to be gone by word level drills. If emphasis remains, it will slow down the speech therapy process.

“Emphasis is like a **brake**.  
You cannot go fast with it **on**.”

# Tip #

# 12

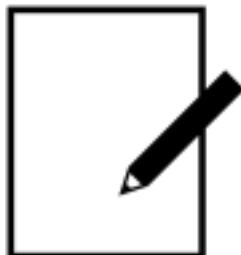
## Same Time, Same Place

Do your best to commit to practicing in the same place at the same time every day. This will develop the habit of consistency. Being committed means establishing a regular homework routine. You are working on a sound that your child will likely use hundreds of times a day every day for the rest of their life. This is important and needs to be a priority!

Set up your consistent work place to include the following:



A Table and  
Two Chairs



A Pencil  
and Paper



A Timer

“Once a **routine** is established the sessions will flow much smoother.”

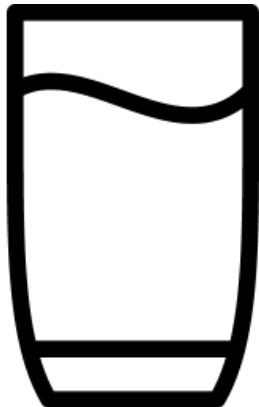
# Tip #

# 13

## Triggers Build Habits

A trigger is a short ritual you perform before a habit. For instance, a trigger for waking up earlier would be jumping out of bed as soon as you hear the sound of your alarm.

A trigger is a short **ritual** you perform before a habit.



A trigger for speech drills could be a glass of water moments before starting your drills. Additionally, a song played as a part of the warm up sequence could work. A trigger helps condition a new pattern.

A trigger helps **condition** a new pattern.

# Tip #

# 14

## Practice Daily



Practicing **5-10 minutes** a day has the most impact on your child's speech. This means you have to commit to making this a priority for you and your child.

If you are reading this then congratulations! You have made your child's speech a priority. The trick now is maintaining that priority. Maintaining your commitment to your child's speech therapy drills is key to speeding up your child's achievement.

Keep the sessions short. It is better to do short sessions daily than longer sessions a few times a week. The sessions should be intense with many repetitions produced. You will eventually be doing a couple hundred reps or more in under 5 minutes.

It is better to do short sessions **daily** than longer sessions a few times a week.

We are focusing on sounds your child can already produce but are doing it quicker and smoother. The more daily sessions you can put together the quicker the results will be.

# Tip #

# 15

## Set Up Reminders

Making the commitment to a regular practice time is the easy part. Actually following through and honoring your commitment is where it gets tricky.

Life has a way of getting busy and in the way of our good intentions. When life gets busy (and it will) it has us forget what we are committed too. It is time to fight back.

Leave reminders for yourself any place you are likely to see it many times throughout the day. This makes it harder for you to forget to practice.



Leave these reminders everywhere. If you are not doing the drills daily then it will be because you are **choosing** not to.

# Tip #

# 16

## Remember 1435

A Speech Pathologist gets to hear how busy a child's life is. I often have clients trying to convince me that they are far too busy for practice.

Karate, piano, dance, soccer, baseball, hockey, movies, parties are just the start of the reasons why their practice can't be done. This earns them a 1435 discussion.



“**There** are 1440 minutes in a 24 hour period.  
**1435** is the number of minutes that remain **after** doing their speech drills.”

In my world there are few things more important than being able to speak and be understood. We are working on something that will be used dozens if not hundreds of times a day for their entire life. This is important!

There is no reason for not being able to do speech drills for 5 minutes a day. It **doesn't take** long. There is no reason your life has to suffer. It just takes some commitment and follow-through.

# Tip #

# 17

## Believe in Your Child's Greatness

Parents need to believe that they can make a difference in their child's speech.

I commonly hear parents report, "My child won't work for me but they will work for others". Each time a parent says this, they are reinforcing their own truth. This is what they truly believe and have the proof to substantiate it.

The biggest **gift** you can give a child is the unwavering belief in their **ability** to progress and improve.

To reverse this it is quite simple. Your actions follow what you think. If you **think your child is incapable of doing something than you won't even try**. Believe in your child's ability whole heartedly. Support them like they are going to succeed. This is the most direct path to success.

**"If you need help in believing in your child, you need to find a Speech Pathologist who **believes in YOU.**"**

It is amazing how much a difference it makes when someone believes in you. When this occurs, what is possible expands.

# Tip #

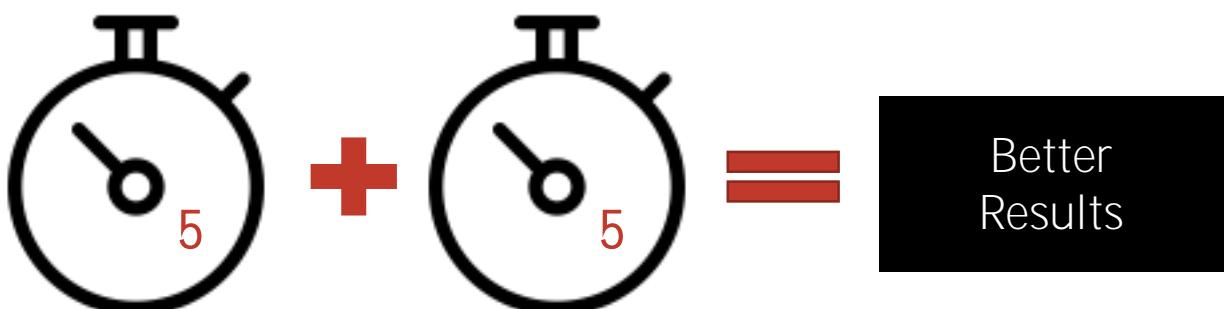
# 18

## Shorter Sessions and More of Them

Want to turbo charge your results?  
Distributed practice (also known as spaced repetition) has proved to be the most effective.



“You will get better results from **2 five** minute sessions than one 10 minute **session**.”



Spend the same amount of time but get more of a result. How cool is that?

# Tip #

# 19

## Build a Speech Team

Many hands make light work. Let this apply to your speech homework. You can maximize the benefit to your child and to lighten the workload by building a team to help with the homework.

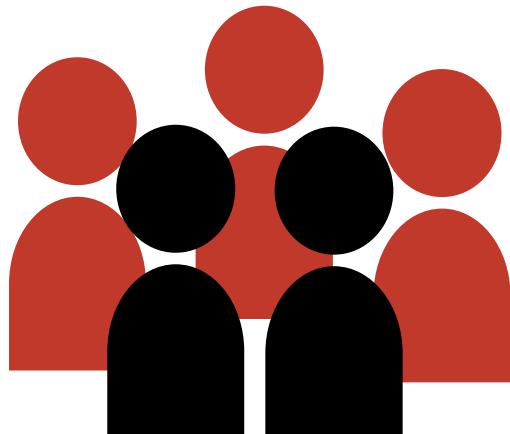
**“Many hands make light work.”**

Sure, it will take time and effort to set up. Once you recruit some helpers and provide them with resources the benefits are huge. More homework helpers will lead to quicker results. Do not feel like you have to do it all yourself.

As a parent YOU ARE BUSY by default and can use all the help you can get. It is amazing how willing people are to help out. Everyone likes to make a difference.

Your team could include:

- Grandparents
- Aunts and Uncles
- Siblings
- Volunteers
- Teachers
- Educational Assistants
- Daycare



# Tip #

# 20

## Seek the Help of a SLP

Be sure to find a Speech Pathologist that will work with **you** and your child. Get trained to be involved in the therapy process and the progress will be much faster. The reason is simple. You have more opportunities to work with your child than a Speech Pathologist does. You are a **key** player. Finding a Speech Language Pathologist to help build your abilities will pay off.

**“You have more opportunities to work with your child than a Speech Pathologist does.”**

You are reading these tips because you want to help someone you care about. **This makes you awesome in my books!** You are the type of person I **love** to work with!! Together we can make things happen faster.

Reach out to me at [marcus@rapidspeechtherapy.com](mailto:marcus@rapidspeechtherapy.com) to get started today.



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