



The 'R' Sound

Welcome to 'r' practice! We believe that parents and caregivers are a child's best teacher and there are many things that you can do at home to improve your child's communication skills.

Developmental Norms:

There is a great deal of variability in acquisition of the 'r' sound, however most¹ children produce the 'r' sound correctly by **8 years of age** in initial, medial, and final position of words.

- 1 Age at which at least 90% of children produced the sound correctly in all word positions. (Adapted norms from The Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation-2)

*For s-blends, please see the separate S-Blends page!

Position:

- *Initial position of words (the sound occurs at the beginning of the word): We call this 'prevocalic r': **ring, rock, red, radio***
- *Vocalic /r/: Occurs in the middle of words (medial position) and at the end of words (final position):*
- *Medial: **berry, bird, clearing, corn, heart, firing***
- *Final: **tiger, hair, clear, store, tire, car***

How to make the “r” sound:

- The teeth are together or slightly parted and the lips are rounded (i.e., puckered or in an "o" shape).
- The tongue moves back slightly and creates a hump in the middle of the mouth OR the tip of the tongue curls up and back towards the middle of the roof of the mouth.
- The voice is turned on.

[Click to watch on YouTube: Demonstration of how to produce 'r'](#)



How to provide feedback for /r/:

BE SPECIFIC!

When the sound was produced correctly: "That was a great 'r' sound!" OR "I really heard your 'mean' sound when you said 'roof.' Great job!"

When the sound was produced incorrectly: "Oops! You forgot the 'r' sound," OR "That sound like you said 'wake' instead of 'rake.' Remember to use your 'r' sound."

You can give the sound a fun name. For example, the 'r' sound could be called the "mean sound" or the "pirate sound". Feel free to get creative and find a name for the sound that works best for your child!



How often should I be practicing with my child?

A useful analogy is to compare working on speech sounds to playing a video game. In many video games, there are different levels that need to be completed or mastered in a sequence.

The length of time a child stays on one level varies greatly from child to child, and can be impacted by a number of factors. These factors include:

- The amount of cueing needed to elicit the sound correctly - we call this *stimulability*. If a child can produce a sound given proper cueing techniques, they are said to be stimuable to produce that sound. Gradually, over time, we can fade the cues so that the child can make the sound by themselves.
- Attention span: A child who is able to focus on practicing his or her speech sound, pay attention to the cues given, and pay attention to their own production is likely to



make progress more quickly than a child who might struggle with attention and focus.

If you feel that your child is not making progress as expected, please contact your school speech-language pathologist for more guidance in this area.

How to Master a Level?

For most 'levels', your child will be ready to move on once he or she is able to produce the sound at that level with 80% accuracy. You don't need to keep track of how your child is doing on each task unless you want to. You can simply estimate approximately how well your child is doing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your school's speech-language pathologist.

Reps: 1 – 2 Activities/Practice sessions per day

Duration: 5 – 15 minutes

Levels:

- Level One: Isolation (e.g., the sound all by itself→ “**r**”)
- Level Two: Syllable (e.g., “**ro**”)
- Level Three: Word (e.g., “**ri**ng”)
- Level Four: Phrase (e.g., “long **ro**pe”)
- Level Five: Sentence (e.g., “The **r**abbit can jump high.)
- Level Six: Conversation (e.g., the sound in everyday conversation)

Why Practice? It’s Like Exercise!

Think of practicing speech sounds as similar to exercising or lifting weights. If you start off by learning correct form, exercising every day, and gradually increasing the difficulty or weight, you will be able to make great progress towards your fitness goal! The same goes for working on speech sounds. We start by showing a child how to properly produce the sound. Then, we work with the child on saying the sound on its own (isolation), then in syllables (la, lee, lie, low, Lou). After that, we target the sound at the word level- beginning, end, middle, and in consonant blends. Gradually, we move to producing the sound at the sentence level, and then at the conversational level.



Short But Often!

Researchers have found that shorter but more frequent practice sessions are **more effective** than longer but less frequent sessions. For this reason, I recommend that you try to sneak in as many short sessions as you can throughout your week. The more you practice, the faster your child will progress. A few 5-minute sessions a day is a great place to start, but you can always do fewer if it doesn't fit into your schedule. Try practicing while driving in the car, while standing in line, or while waiting for a doctor's appointment to get in a few extra repetitions.

Phonological Processes for /r/:

A *phonological process* is a typical error pattern that young children use to simplify an adult speech sound they are not able to say. In the case of the /r/ sound, one error that children may exhibit is called *gliding*. In this error pattern, the child substitutes a /w/ or a /y/ sound for the /r/ sound, as both these sounds are easier to say than the /r/ sound. The most typical gliding error for /r/ is a /w/ substitution. When children do this they say "wabbit" for "rabbit", "fuwwy" for "furry" and "caw" for "car".

Gliding for the /r/ sound can sometimes be a typical developmental pattern that some children demonstrate as they are learning speech sounds. But correct production of the /r/ sound is also acquired by many children when they are babies and toddlers and are just learning to talk.

A /w/ for /r/ substitution is very common in elementary school children, and the school SLPs get numerous referrals for students with /r/ problems in all grades throughout the year. Unfortunately, for children who have not acquired correct production of the /r/ sound on their own, it can be very difficult for them to learn to produce correctly. Because the /r/ sound is extremely common in the English language, it is a critical sound to learn to say



correctly. Unlike some other speech sound errors, a /w/ for /r/ substitution or distortion is a highly noticeable articulation error.

Tips for working on gliding at home:

When children substitute /w/ for /r/, they are not using their tongue muscle at all, and instead are using their lips to make a /w/ sound. In order to acquire correct production of the /r/ sound, children need to learn to move their tongue, not their lips.

There are a couple of ways that the /r/ sound can be produced correctly. One way is with the tip of the tongue UP and pulled BACK. Another way is with the tongue tightened at the edges, almost as if you are trying to bite the sides of your tongue with your back teeth. The UP and BACK method is easier for children to see, so it is often the technique that children first learn in speech therapy. Three important reminders for remediating gliding for the /r/ sound are: 1) *Move your tongue*; 2) *Pull it back*; 3) *Make it tight*.

Be Specific: tell your children that the /r/ sound is made with our tongue, not our lips, and that they are putting their lips together to make a /w/ sound instead of moving their tongue to make an /r/ sound.

Give an Example: give your children examples of their errors (e.g. "You said *wun* when you meant to say *run*").

Provide a Model: have your child look closely at your mouth as you model the syllable "ruh" , not a whole word, and talk about how you can make this sound by lifting up your tongue and pulling it back in your mouth, or by pulling back your tongue and tightening the edges.

Use a Tactile Aid: press your fingers under your child's chin to touch the area at the back of the throat where the neck starts. This demonstrates the idea of tongue retraction for production of the /r/ sound.

Get Help: it is normal for children to have difficulty learning the /r/ sound as it is a difficult sound to teach and to learn. Talk to your school SLP for support with this tricky speech sound.

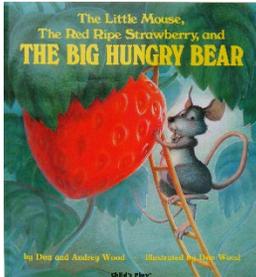
Learning with Games

- **Play Red Rover**
- **Build a cardboard box robot**

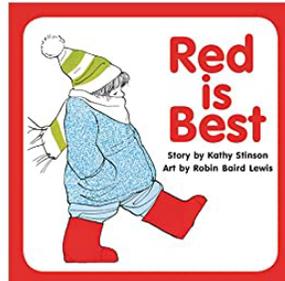


- Have a race with toy cars
- Pretend to be astronauts and build a rocket ship

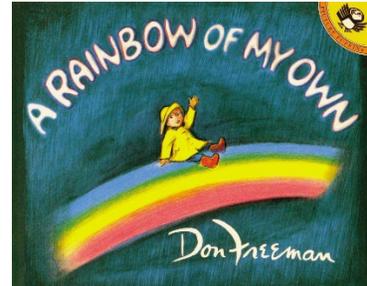
Sound-Loaded Books: R



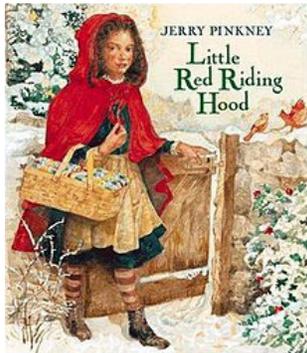
**The Red Ripe Strawberry
and the Hungry Bear**



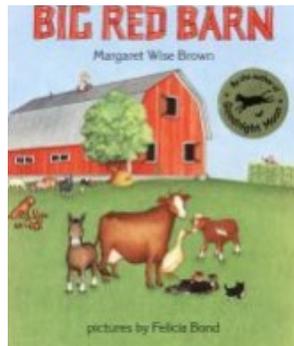
Red is Best



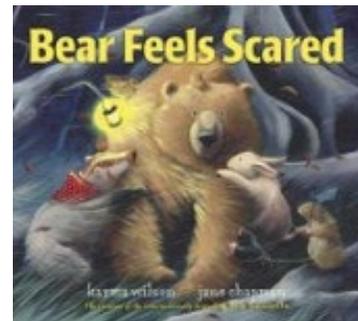
A Rainbow of My Own



Little Red Riding Hood



Big Red Barn



Bear Feels Scared

Helpful Websites

- [Practical Speech Therapy Activities for Home Practice](#)
- [Working Speech and Language into Daily Routines](#)
- [Fun Family Crafts](#)
- [Printables for Kids: KizClub](#)

Songs Featuring 'R'

- [YouTube: Row, Row, Row Your Boat](#)
- [YouTube: Ring Around The Rosy](#)
- [YouTube: Remember Me \(from Disney's Coco\)](#)
- [YouTube: Reflection \(from Disney's Mulan\)](#)



R Crafts

- [Make a Rocket using Toilet Paper Roll](#)
- [Make a Snowglobe full of 'R' words!](#)
- [Make a Robot out of Cereal Boxes!](#)