



The 'SH' Sound

Welcome to 'sh' 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:

Most¹ children produce the 'sh' sound correctly by 6 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): **sheep**, **shoes**, **shave**
- *Medial position of words* (the sound occurs in the middle of the word): **lotion**, **pushups**, **mushroom**
- *Final position of words* (the sound occurs at the end of the word): **crush**, **splash**, **dish**

How to make the “sh” sound:

- The teeth are together and the lips are slightly rounded (i.e., puckered).
- The sides of the tongue are up and pressed against the inside of the top teeth, the tongue is slightly pulled back in the mouth behind the bumpy part of the roof of the mouth.
- Air will flow over the centre of the tongue and out.
- The voice is turned off and the sound is long.

[Click to watch on YouTube: How to teach the “sh” sound](#)



How to provide feedback for /sh/:

BE SPECIFIC!

When the sound was produced correctly: “That was a great ‘sh’ sound!” OR “I really heard your ‘quiet’ sound when you said ‘shape.’ Great job!”

When the sound was produced incorrectly: “Oops! You forgot the ‘sh’ sound” OR “That sound like you said ‘so’ instead of ‘show.’ Remember to use your ‘sh’ sound.”

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



Quiet Sound
“shhh”

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 → “**sh**”)
- Level Two: Syllable (e.g., “**sh**o”)
- Level Three: Word (e.g., “**sh**oe”)
- Level Four: Phrase (e.g., “white **sh**eep”)
- Level Five: Sentence (e.g., “My dad **sh**aves his face.)
- 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 “sh”:

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 /sh/ sound, one error that children may exhibit is called *depalatization*. The word *palatal* refers to the roof of the mouth, so children who exhibit depalatization, also called *palatal fronting*, are putting their tongue at the front of their mouth instead of moving it back a little to make the /sh/ sound. When they do this they end up substituting /s/ for /sh/, so "sheep" is "seep", "share" is "sare", "fish" is "fiss", etc.

A second phonological process that can occur with the /sh/ sound is something called *stopping*. In this error pattern, the child substitutes a stop consonant that has no airflow, such as /d/ or /t/, for the /sh/ sound, which needs to be produced with continuous airflow. When they do this they say "deep" or "teep" instead of "sheep", "dare" or "tare" instead of "share" and "fit" instead of "fish".

Most babies and very young children demonstrate *depalatization* as a normal developmental process, but *stopping*, is NOT a typical pattern and is a red flag for an articulation disorder. The earlier parents work with their children to modify their stopping,



the less likely it is that this error pattern will become habituated and require speech therapy.

Tips for working on stopping at home:

Be Specific: tell your children that they are stopping their air instead of letting their air flow out of their mouth to make the /sh/ sound.

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

Provide a Model: have your child look closely at your mouth as you model the /sh/ sound all by itself, not in a word, and point out how the tip of your tongue is staying DOWN and you are letting your air keep going.

Use a Tactile Aid: run your finger down your child's arm when you stretch out the /sh/ sound, and then tap your finger on your child's arm when you make the /d/ sound so he can feel the difference between a stop sound and one that is made with continuous airflow.

Keep the Baby Quiet: show your child the "shhhhhh" sound you make with your finger on your lips when you want someone to be quiet. Really stretch out the sound to emphasize the concept of continuous airflow.

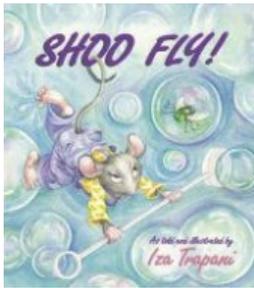
Accept an /s/ Substitution: if your child makes an /s/ sound instead of an /sh/ sound when you are doing your demonstrations, accept this production as it shows he is understanding the concept of continuous airflow. It is easy to shape an /s/ sound into an /sh/ sound later in your work with your child.

Learning with Games

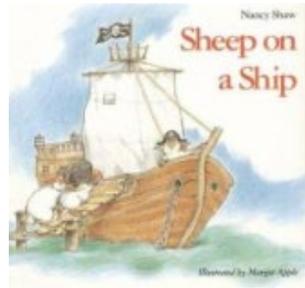
- **Hidden sheep!** Hide sheep around the house and count how many you can find!
- **Make a ship fort!**
- **Pretend to be a shark!** Use the phrase: "Watch out for my sharp teeth!"
- **Board games:** Play Battleship or any other board game! Before each turn, each person has to name one or two picture cards with the "sh" sound. Some other games that we commonly use during therapy are: Chutes and Ladders, Don't Spill the Beans, Candyland, Don't Break the Ice, Connect Four, and Kerplunk.



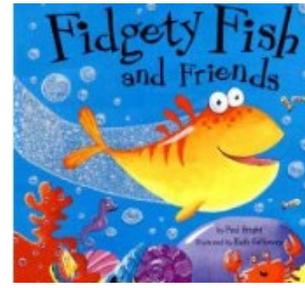
Sound-Loaded Books: SH



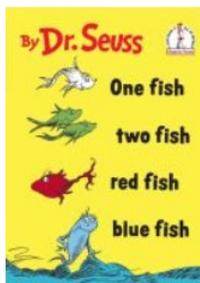
Shoo Fly!



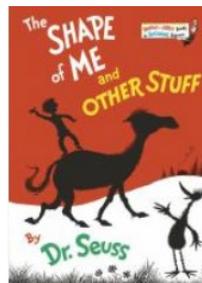
Sheep on a Ship



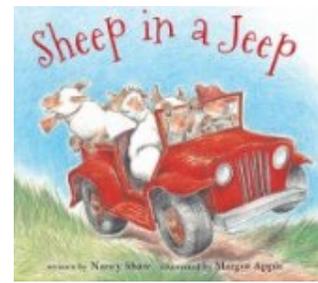
Fidgety Fish and Friends



**One Fish, Two Fish, Red
Fish, Blue Fish**



**The Shape of Me and
Other Stuff**



Sheep in a Jeep

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 'SH'

- [Youtube: Head Shoulders Knees & Toes](#)
- [Youtube: Baby Shark](#)
- [Youtube: I Love My White Shoes](#)

SH Crafts

- [Pom Pom Sheep](#)
- [Shark Tooth Necklace](#)
- [Foil Fish](#)

