



The 'TH' Sound

Welcome to 'th' 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.

There are two 'th' sounds in our speech sound repertoire: **Voiced 'th'** and **Voiceless 'th'**.

Voiced 'th' is the first sound in the word '**th**at'. It is made with our voice turned on.

Voiceless 'th' is the first sound in the word '**th**umb'. It is made with our voice turned off.

Developmental Norms:

Most¹ children produce the 'th' sound correctly by **9 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)

Position:

- Initial position of words (the sound occurs at the beginning of the word):
 - **Voiced:** **th**e, **th**ough, **th**ere
 - **Voiceless:** **Th**ursday, **th**ank you, **th**ink
- Medial position of words (the sound occurs in the middle of the word):
 - **Voiced:** feather, bath**th**ing, weath**th**er
 - **Voiceless:** birth**th**day, tooth**th**paste, health**th**y
- Final position of words (the sound occurs at the end of the word):
 - **Voiced:** bath**th**e, breath**th**e
 - **Voiceless:** tooth**th**, mouth**th**, with**th**

How to make the “th” sound:

- The tongue sticks out slightly and is between the front teeth.
- Air flows over the centre of the tongue and out.
- The voice is turned on or off depending on the "th" word (e.g., "thirsty" vs. "though").

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



How to provide feedback for /th/:

BE SPECIFIC!

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

When the sound was produced incorrectly: "Oops! You forgot the 'th' sound" OR "That sound like you said 'dere' instead of 'there.' Remember to use your 'th' sound."

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



THE RUDE SOUND

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→ “**th**”)
- Level Two: Syllable (e.g., “**tho**”)
- Level Three: Word (e.g., “**th**ick”)
- Level Four: Phrase (e.g., “**th**ird place”)
- Level Five: Sentence (e.g., “I am so **th**irsty.”)
- 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.

Common error patterns for "th":

The /th/ sound is often the last sound to develop for most children, and it is very common to see substitutions for the /th/ sound until about 6 years of age or later. The /th/ sound can be *voiced* or *voiceless*. *Voiced /th/* is when the vocal cords vibrate to make the harder /th/ sound as in the words "this", "those", "them", etc. *Voiceless /th/* is made without vocal cord vibration and is the softer /th/ sound as in the words "thumb", "think", and "Thursday".

The most common error that children exhibit for voiced /th/ is a /d/ substitution, so this is when children say "dis" for "this", "dat" for "that" and "dem" for "them". Sometimes children will also substitute /v/ for voiced /th/, as in "vis" for "this", "vem" for "them", "breave" for "breathe", etc.

The most common error pattern that children exhibit for voiceless /th/ is an /f/ substitution, so this is when children say "fumb" for "thumb", "fink" for "think", "baf" for "bath", etc.

*Please note that these substitutions are typical developmental patterns that almost all young children demonstrate when they are learning to talk. Errors for the /th/ sound are also extremely common in children who speak English as an additional language, as the /th/ sound is not one that is evident in many languages.



Tips for working on “th” at home:

Be Specific: tell your children exactly what they are doing instead of making the /th/ sound (e.g. "You are making a /d/ sound instead of a /th/ sound because you're not putting your tongue out", "You are making an /f/ sound instead of a /th/ sound because you are not using your tongue to make this sound").

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

Provide a Model: have your child look closely at your mouth as you model the /th/ sound all by itself, not in a word, and talk about how you need to put your tongue out, just a little, to make the /th/ sound.

Use a Mirror: find a mirror that is big enough for both your face and your child's face. Make the /th/ sound with your tongue out, just a little, and have your child try to do the same.

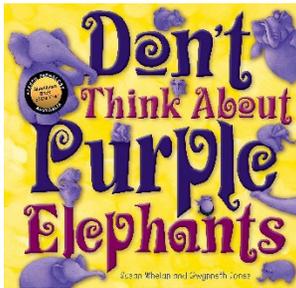
Remember to Relax: remember that this sound is typically the last sound for all English speaking children to develop, and you DON'T need to be concerned if your child is under 7-8 years old and is not yet making this sound correctly. If your child is still not making the sound correctly at age 8, it is typically very easy to teach and to learn!

Learning with Games

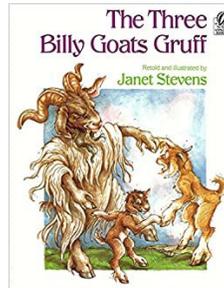
- **Crocodile Dentist:** Play crocodile dentist and watch out for the sharp teeth! Before each turn, have each player name one or two "th" picture cards. Any favourite board game can be used while naming "th" picture cards before each turn. Some games commonly used in therapy include: Chutes and Ladders, Candyland, Kerplunk, Don't Break the Ice, Pop Up Pirate
- **Catch the thief!** Play a game of tag/hide and seek and have the police catch the thief!
- **Memory:** Play memory with "th" picture cards! Practice the phrase "I found both _____"
- **Play-Doh:** Use Play-Doh to make a model of the earth!



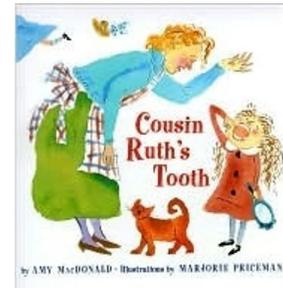
Sound-Loaded Books: TH



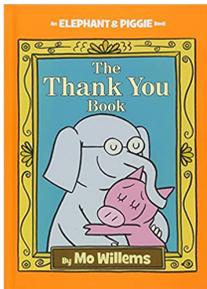
**Don't Think About Purple
Elephants**



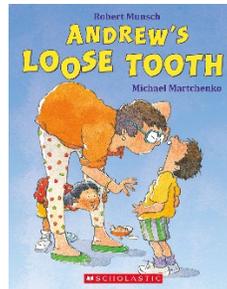
The Three Billy Goats Gruff



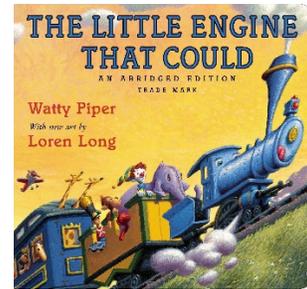
Cousin Ruth's Tooth



The Thank You Book



Andrew's Loose Tooth



**The Little Engine That
Could**

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 'TH'

- [YouTube: Three Blind Mice](#)
- [YouTube: This Little Piggy Went To Market](#)
- [Youtube: Thank you song](#)

TH Crafts

- [Birthday cake box](#)



- [Puffy Paint Thunderstorm](#)
- [Christmas Wreath](#)