



How to Teach the SH Sound

The /sh/ sound is made by putting the teeth together and bringing the corners of the lips towards the middle, so the lips pucker like a kiss. The middle of the tongue comes up only slightly and barely touches the corners of the top teeth without touching the roof of the mouth. The front of the tongue dips down a tiny bit, but does not touch anything else in the mouth. The /sh/ sound is an unvoiced sound, which means what we hear when we make the sound comes only from the passage of air through the mouth and not from the vibration of vocal cords.

Verbal Cues

When practicing a single sound with your child, it is important to repeat the sound clearly and slowly by itself, so your child understands what you are focusing on. This also gives a good example of the sound for him to imitate. Begin with “/sh/, /sh/, /sh/” and encourage your child to repeat the sound as well. If your little one has trouble, try having them start with saying the long /e/ sound and coach them into transforming it into the /sh/ sound. Ask your child to say the long /e/ sound as a whisper, and then to pull the corners of their mouth together into a kiss shape. This should result in the /sh/ sound. After your child can successfully make and use the /sh/ sound by itself, practice with syllables, small words, and eventually sentences.

Visual Cues

Your little ones are likely already very familiar with the /sh/ sound in the form of “shushing”. When a child sees someone with puckered lips with their finger resting on them, they usually recognize the symbol for being quiet. Use this familiarity to help teach cue your child to make the /sh/ sound. Put your own finger to your lips in the “shhh” symbol, and encourage your child to “shush” you back. Gradually, your child will become more comfortable with making the /sh/ sound and will be able to use it in syllables and words as well.

Tactile Cues

When the /sh/ sound is pronounced correctly, a small stream of air escapes from between the lips. Have your little one put her hand in front of your lips as you make the sound to feel the air. Then, ask her to put her hand in front of her own mouth while she makes the sound. Can she feel the air? This is a sign she can use to tell if she is making the sound right.