# Speech Therapy Sequence - /s/ Sound
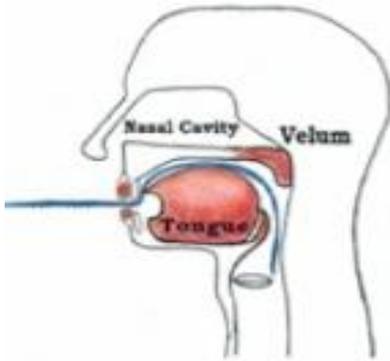
Case Example: John is a 5 year old boy with an interdental /s/. That is, his tongue pokes through his teeth to change the /s/ sound to a /th/ sound. This has a very mild impact on his speech but the sound is something that needs to be addressed. You begin speech therapy by explaining to John the error he is making.

Step 1: Isolated Sound Level

Clinician: *'I want you to try this new sound. The sound is /s/. The /s/ is a long stream of air sound and we make the sound by pursing our lips a little and have our tongue near the top of our mouth, but don't let your tongue poke between your teeth. When your tongue pokes through the /s/ sound becomes the /th/ sound.'*

The clinician demonstrates the correct /s/ sound. Demonstrate to the child the correct **cue sign** at this point and reinforce that the tongue should *not* poke through the teeth. Practise the new /s/ sound as often as is needed. Once the child is competent at sound level, move onto sound combined with a vowel.

Step 2: Syllable Level: *Sound with Vowel*

Clinician: *'I'm happy with your clear and lovely /s/ sound. Let's try something new. Let's try the /s/ sound with a vowel. I'll show you what I mean. s….ooo,'*

The clinician demonstrates the /s/ with vowel combination. Note that at this early point that there is a gap between the /s/ and the vowel. This is to protect against the child returning to their ingrained habit of using the /th/ sound. Some possible /s/ vowel combinations are… s…ooo, s…eee,

s…ar, s…or, s…ay, s…ir,. **Successful sound with vowel is one of the critical points in traditional speech therapy.**

John attempts the /s/ and vowel combination. He quickly reverts to his previous use of /th/, so s…ooo becomes th…ooo. The /s/ sound needs to be strengthened. Note, the **double sided arrow** points both back and forward. In this example, we return to the previous level. John produces /s/ sound in isolation to re-establish the sound. Once the /s/ sound is re-established the clinician tries again with /s/ and vowel.

Once the child is able to produce s…ee, s…oo, s…ar, etc the clinician introduces the concept of the train and carriage as a metaphor of bringing the two sounds together with a visual reinforcement. Attempt s…oo, s..oo, soo, gradually compressing the distance between the consonant and vowel until all **cv** combos are correct. If the /th/ sound intrudes, return to s…ooo, s…ee to re-establish target sound, as is described in the contingency continuum.
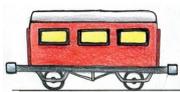
Step 2.1:

Aspiration Sound Technique

A great technique to help a child eradicate an intrusive sound error is to use the aspirated /h/ as a carrier phoneme. The /h/ helps ease the distance between the target consonant and the vowel. For instance, with our /th/ for /s/ example, the /th/ continues to intrude so *s…ee* is intruded upon by *s…thee.* The /h/ phoneme is technically a consonant but has elements of a voiceless vowel and is perfect for attaching to the …*ee* vowel to smooth the distance between the /s/ and vowel. So for *s…ee* we add *s…hee.* The /h/ phoneme is very quiet so is not an intrusive sound and blocks the sound error intrusion from attaching to the vowel …*ee.* The /h/ sound is gradually faded out until the child can confidently produce the target sound and vowel combination without the established sound error intruding.

Step 3: Word Level

At word level you can begin to use the /s/ picture cards. If all the previous stages have been completed successfully then sound at word level will be the next step. While attempting word level speech therapy, if the child returns to /th/ at any point, re-establish the new sound by demonstrating /s/ in isolation or /s/ with vowel.

Appendix

The locomotive and carriage images are a useful way to demonstrate to a child how to progressively link a consonant target sound with a vowel sound. In this instance, the green locomotive represents the target **consonan**t /s/ and the red carriage represents any **vowel**.

Cut out the images and laminate them. The images can be used with any consonant and vowel sound you wish to combine.