Book 3. VERBAL IMITATION:   
Teaching a Child to Imitate   
Sounds, Words, Phrases, and Sentences

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**1. WHAT THIS SKILL AREA IS ABOUT**

There are two sides to speech or *verbal behavior.* One side is learning *how* to say sounds, words, phrases, and sentences by moving the lips, tongue, jaws, vocal chords, and breathing muscles together in different ways. The other side is learning what words, phrases, and sentences *mean* and when and how to *use* them in daily life. This book is about Verbal Imitation, the first side of verbal behavior---teaching a child *how* to say sounds, words, phrases, and sentences. The next book in the series is Functional Speech---teaching a child to communicate with words, phrases, and sentences.

**Some Kids Have More Functional Speech.**

Jimmy and Pearl have little Functional Speech, such as naming things, asking, and describing. They don’t **say** words, or even say many different sounds. They communicate mostly with gestures (pointing), touching what they want, taking a person’s hand and tugging, and saying a few sounds and simple words---“Go go,” “appa” (apple), “mummah.” That’s a GOOD start! Why? Because,

These kids “get” the idea that gestures and words have meaning (point to objects and actions) for the other person! They *are* communicating.

Now we’ll teach more ways to communicate!  
 Steven, Nancy, Tommy, and Ricky say a couple dozen words, and use these (as Functional Speech) to ask, answer, and describe. “More eat.” “Go out?” “Yes.” “It red.” So, we’ll teach these kids to say, and then to communicate with (use), more sounds, syllables, words, phrases and sentences. Finally, Tito, Jack, and Mark communicate with hundreds of words, phrases, and sentences. “Hi, Pop.” “Computer time?” “What’s tremendous mean?” “This toad is grey and brown.” “See you later.” But they have trouble with (1) some sounds and words---reterant (restaurant), friggator (refrigerator), muttaply (multiply)—and with (2) some *kinds* of Functional Speech, such as asking questions in complete sentences, or telling what happened first and what happened later. Methods in this book and in the next book---Functional Speech---help all the children communicate by stringing sounds into words, phrases and sentences.

**What is Verbal Imitation?**

We are not born with words in our mouths. We *learn* to talk. How? No one sits down and teaches us every word. Instead, we (1) *listen* to our parents and other persons talk; (2) *watch* how they move their lips, tongue, and jaws while they talk; and (3) *try to repeat* or *imitate* what we hear and see. Most important, persons *react* to our speech. They smile, repeat what we say (“Yes, Momma!”) or give a correction (“Mmmaaammaaa”), praise us, and give us things we want. In other words, speaking is rewarded and reinforced as we learn to imitate. And the more speech is reinforced, the harder and the *more often* we try, and the *better* we talk. So Verbal Imitationis the way children usually learn *how* to say sounds, words, phrases, and sentences.

**Tips on Using This Book**

*We often learn best in small steps.* So, we want a little progress each week, not a big “breakthrough.” Each new sound or word a child learns (*Ahhh, Mmm*, *Eee*) makes it easier tolearn the next ones and harder ones (*G*, *Fff,* and *Zzz*). These sounds and words soon add up. “Ma” becomes “Mamma” becomes “Mamma come.” Pointing to toys becomes “Pay” becomes “Play” becomes “Play me” becomes “Play with me.”

*How Teach Verbal Imitation in Small Steps.* Please look at Figure 3-1 in the book on Learning Readiness.

Notice the Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills that we teach before Verbal Imitation. Earlier skills help the child to learn the next skills. This means that

We firm up some earlier Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills before we teach Verbal Imitation.

For some children, Verbal Imitation is a big step beyond what they have been learning, so wemove carefully. Here’s how.  
 In Section 2, we *evaluate a child’s Verbal Imitation skills*. This tells which kinds of Verbal Imitation (sounds, syllables, words, phrases) are stronger and which are weaker. So, if a child does not imitate phrases, words, or syllables, we start with sounds imitation.  
 In Section 3, we *firm up Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills* (that we worked on earlier) needed now to learn Verbal Imitation.   
 In section 4, *we ease a child into Verbal Imitation by teaching basic Verbal Imitation skills*, such as mouth movements, paying attention to the speech of other persons, and saying many different sounds that a child later learns to imitate (VI1-6).  
 In Section 5, we learn *how to* *teach* Verbal Imitation.   
 In Section 6, we teach *basic sounds---Mmm, Eee, Ahhh*.  
 In Section 7, we teach a child to *link* sounds into *syllables---MAhh, MAyyy, BAyyy BEe, BAh, LAhhh, DEee*.  
In Section 8, we *link* sounds and syllables into *words---*mama, eat, more, up.  
 In Section 9, the child learnstoimitate *phrases* and *simple sentences.* Want to eat. Go out. That’s a ball.  
 In section 10, we see how to prevent and *solve common problems*.

What the child learns in one section helps in the next. It’s a logical progression. We teach the knowledge/skill elements (parts) that are IN a new skill before we teach the new skill. For instance, we firm up sitting big 🡪 watching 🡪 cooperating 🡪 mouth movements 🡪 and imitating, before we teach sounds imitation; we teach sounds before syllables; syllables before words; and words before phrases and sentences. Each skill learned is an element of the next skills. But remember this rule:

AS SOON AS A CHILD SAYS OR IMITATES *ANY* SPEECH SOUND, WORD, OR PHRASE, TEACH HER TO *USE* IT TO COMMUNICATE WHAT SHE WANTS AND THEN TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS. MAKE IT FUNCTIONAL.

In other words, as she learns *how* to say sounds and words, apply Grandma’s Law to teach her to *use* them, *even if she does not at first say them accurately.* For example, Pearl just learned to say and then to imitate *Oh*. Now, she is turning the front door knob. She looks at Mom. Mom says, “You want me (points to herself) to OOO--PEN (rattles door knob) the door? ASK. Say ‘OOOOPEN.’” Pearl says, “Ohhh.” Mom says, “Yes, OOOOpen. Open the door,” and opens the door.

The more a child *uses* (communicates with) what she says, at her *point of* success, the faster she will learn to talk. So,

Please see the book on Functional Speech NOW, to get an idea of how to teach a child to USE the words, phrases, and sentences. For instance, look at the sections on naming, asking, and describing.

Okay, let’s evaluate.

**2. LET’S EVALUATE VERBAL IMITATION SKILLS**

Please skim the names of the items below, to see the sequence. Then come on back and we’ll evaluate each one.

The first six items *ease* a child into Verbal Imitation, in section 3. Items VI3 and VI6 are *musts* for this. You can evaluate your child two ways.   
  
1. Think about when you have tried to get your child to imitate speech. Or when you’ve noticed that your child is trying to do what someone else is doing. Does she imitate any sounds or words? Does she try to imitate, but says the wrong sounds? Does she watch your mouth movements and speech models? Make a list of what you remember!

2. Give short sessions, as when we worked on Motor Imitation in (1) section 7, Imitating Simple Movements, Chapter Fourteen in the book on Learning Readiness); and (2) Book 2 (Motor Imitation) in this series. Write down the sounds and words that

a. The child imitates very well, and

b. The child tries to imitate but needs more teaching. For instance, the model is *Eeee* but the child says *Ahhh.* Or the model is eat, but the child says *Eeee.*

As you evaluate the items below,

a. Think of sounds, words, phrases, and sentences (models) to teach your child to imitate. Start at what you think is your child’s point of success. For example, Pearl imitates *Mmm*, *Ahhh*, *HAhh*,*,* and *MmmAhhh*, but not baby, under, and I want ice cream. Then  
b. Make sure your child is sitting big.  
c. Gain your child’s attention. “Listen” [point to your mouth.]. Or, “Watch my mouth.”

d. Frame the task.   
 “Let’s play Say what (Mommy, Daddy) says.” Or   
 “I’ll say a [sound, word]. Then YOU’LL say that [sound, word].” Or,   
 “Let’s talk.” Or   
 Make up your own frame. For instance,

“Mommy (point) SAYS. Pearl (point) SAYS.”   
 “Daddy (point) TALKS. Jimmy (point) TALKS.”  
e. Show the sound model clearly, and perhaps drag it out a bit. Perhaps repeat.  
f. Say, “Your (or child’s name, plus point) turn. Say…. (sound/word/phrase).”   
g. If your child can use help, give a prompt. For example, help your child to close her lips for *Mmmm*, or gently move her mouth open for *Ahhh*, or model how to move *your* mouth for the sound; for instance, open mouth wide for *Ohhh*, lips closed for *Mmmm*.  
h. Take notes on whether your child imitated well, was close, imitated on her own, imitated with a prompt, tried but said a different sound, or did not respond. Remember the Three-Try Rule. After a few tries, go to another model.

Items VI1-VI6 help ease the child into Verbal Imitation.

**VI1. IF THE CHILD DOES NOT SAY ANY WORDS OR SAYS ONLY A FEW WORDS, DOES HE PAY ATTENTION TOPEOPLE WHO ARE TALKING IN NATURAL SETTINGS?** For example, if Mom is talking about what she is doing *(self-talk),* does the child look at her or make sounds along with her or after her? (Underline.)

a. Child (often; sometimes; rarely; never really) pays attention to the speech of others in this way.

b. Child pays attention to the speech of (almost anyone; most people; only certain people; does not pay attention to speech yet).

It will be easier for the child to learn Verbal Imitation skills if he pays attention to the speech of other persons in everyday settings. This book tells you (in the section on self-talk) how to teach this behavior.

**VI2. IF THE CHILD SAYS NO WORDS OR FEW WORDS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT SPEECH SOUNDS HE DOES MAKE**. So, spend a day listening to the child. In the space below, list the different sounds the child makes on his own. We are not talking only about sounds he imitates. Write down any speech sounds (except crying and other nonspeech noises) that he makes on his own. Write them as if they were in words. Section 6 of this chapter shows how to write sounds; for example, *Ah* as in mama, *BEe* as in bee, or *Uh* as in up.   
 Please review “Part Two: Good Sounds/Words” in Chapter Thirteen of the book on Learning Readiness. You made a list there, too. Maybe your child says more good sounds and words now!

a. Sounds heard the most often:

b. Sounds heard once in a while:

c. Sounds child used to make but does not any more:

Remember this list. We’ll need it when we start working on Verbal Imitation.

**VI3. THE CHILD MAKES MANY DIFFERENT SPEECH SOUNDS ON HIS OWN (OTHER THAN CRYING AND OTHER NONSPEECH NOISES), AND HE MAKES HIS SOUNDS OFTEN.** (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a. Child makes speech sounds on his own (often, sometimes; rarely; never).

b. The number of different speech sounds the child says regularly (most often) is (more than fifteen; between ten and fifteen; between five and ten; less than five). See the list you made for item VI2, above, and for the section, “Part Two: Good Sounds/Words” in Chapter Thirteen in the book on Learning Readiness.

We will use tag-reinforce-verify (“Yes, *Eeee*.”) to increase the number of times (how often) a child makes speech sounds on her own during the day. Then we move to an *intermittent (less and less often) schedule*. When we tag-reinforce-verify speech sounds intermittently, we use strong reinforcers, such as treats, so that the reinforcement has power. And, to teach a child to make **different** sounds, we tag-reinforce-verify **different** (new) sounds. We talk about how later in this book.

**VI4. WHEN THE CHILD MAKES SOUNDS, HOW DOES SHE USUALLY DO IT?** (Circle one.)

a. Her “bursts” of sounds usually have only one or two sounds in them. For instance, she goes *Eeeeee* or *Ahhh­YAahhh*. And the bursts are pretty short.

b. Her bursts of sounds usually have several different sounds in them, as if she were babbling. For example, she goes *BAh-BAh-BAh-GU- GU-DAh*. In other words, her sounds come out in fairly long strings with several different sounds.

c. She makes both long and short bursts with different sounds. She seems to be listening or paying attention to the sounds she is making, especially when she makes a new one. She may try to repeat a new sound she just made. She seems to be playing with her voice and the sounds she makes.

If you circled a., we want to move the child to b. and c. In other words, we want to teach her to make long bursts with many sounds (babbling). We want her to play with her voice and listen to it. This book tells you how to teach the child to make sounds in that way.

**VI5. IF THE CHILD DOES NOT SAY WORDS, OR SAYS ONLY A FEW WORDS, DOES HE MAKE MORE SOUNDS IF YOU REPEAT HIS SOUNDS?** For example, if he is saying or has just said *Eeee-Ahhh*, and you say it along with him, or repeat it to him, will he say *Eeee-Ahhh* again or perhaps another sound? (Underline.)

a. Child (often; sometimes; rarely; never really) makes more sounds if you repeat his sounds along with him or after him.

Some children who do not imitate sounds or words will keep making sounds if you repeat back to them the sounds they just made. It is as if they are rewarded by hearing someone else repeat their sounds. This means they will probably learn Verbal Imitation more easily. This book tells you how to increase the child’s sounds by imitating the sounds he makes. See the section called “Imitating His Sounds.”

**VI6. THE CHILD MAKES EYE CONTACT AND A SOUND AT THE SAME TIME TO GET THINGS HE WANTS.** For example, he comes to a person, makes eye contact, and then makes a sound, as if he were trying to tell the person something or to get the person to do something. (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a. Child (often; sometimes; rarely; never) does this.

b. If the child makes sounds this way, how close to words are they? For example, does he say things like *WAh* for water? *TAh-U* for Thank you? *Ow* for out? Or *BAh-BAh* for bye-bye? Child uses (more than ten; between five and ten; three to five; one or two; no) sounds that are close to words.

c. Child makes eye contact this way, but not sounds with it.

d. Child makes sounds this way, but not eye contact with them.

e. Child makes eye contact and sounds to get things from (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not do this yet).

f. In the space below, please list the sounds the child often uses to get things he wants. See the lists you made in the section on “Part Two: Good Sounds/Words,” in Chapter Thirteen in the book on Learning Readiness. Maybe your child now uses more sounds to communicate!   
 Important! *You can* ***start*** *with these sounds* because they are so close to words your child can use. Teach your child to imitate when YOU make these sounds/words, and then gradually tag- reinforce as the child gets closer and closer to saying words. Like this.

*Oh Ow* 🡪 Work on *G* sound. 🡪 *GOh Ow* 🡪 Work on *T* sound. 🡪 *Go out.*

*Sound Child Uses What Word it Means How to Make it a Word*

If the child makes eye contact and a sound together (the two are *linked*)*,* he may have the idea behind Functional Speech (we use sounds to *have an effect on* the scene around us). This will make it easier to teach Verbal Imitation and Functional Speech. If he does not do this behavior yet, increase how often he makes eye contact and sounds. Then *require* him to do *both* before he gets what he wants. This book tells how.

The next five items have to do with imitating sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences.

**VI7. THE CHILD IMITATES OR REPEATS *BASIC SOUNDS* THAT HE HEARS YOU SAY OR THAT YOU ASK HIM TO SAY.** For instance, if you say, “Wow!” or “Daddy’s home,” the child sometimes tries to imitate. Or if you tell him, “Say *Mmm*,” or “Say *Eee*,”he does it. (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a. How many basic sounds does the child usually and correctly imitate this way? (just about any sound; more than fifteen; between ten and fifteen; between five and ten; a few; none really)

b. Of the basic sounds that you ask the child to imitate, how regularly or how often does he imitate them? (just about every time; more than half the time; once in a while; does not imitate)

c. Of the basic sounds the child imitates, how well does he usually imitate them? How close is his imitation to the basic sound model? (usually perfect imitations; usually very close; usually fairly close; not very close, but at least he makes some sound; does not try to imitate)

d. Of the basic sounds the child imitates, how fast does his imitation follow the model? For instance, if you say, “Say *Ee*,” how long does it take before he imitates or tries to? (usually imitates within a few seconds; usually imitates between 5 and 10 seconds later; usually says the sound later that day; may say the sound days later; does not imitate basic sounds)

e. How well does the child usually cooperate when you try to get him to imitate basic sounds? (pays attention and tries; pays attention sometimes and makes a half-hearted try; ignores you; puts up fuss; never tried to get him to imitate basic sounds)

So, do we need to firm up sitting big, making eye contact, watching your movements, cooperating?

f. In the space below, please list the basic sounds the child imitates well and often. *Section* 6 shows how to write sounds.

**VI8. THE CHILD IMITATES OR REPEATS *SYLLABLES* (TWO**

**OR MORE BASIC SOUNDS TOGETHER) THAT SHE HEARS OR THAT YOU ASK HER TO SAY.** For example, the child imitates things like *SEe*, *BAh*, *LU*, *MAw*. (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a. How many syllables does the child usually and correctly imitate? (just about any syllable; more than fifteen; between ten and fifteen; between five and ten; a few; none really)

b. Of the syllables the child imitates, how regularly or often does she imitate them? (just about every time; more than half the time; once in a while; does not imitate syllables)

c. Of the syllables the child imitates, how well does she usually imitate them? How close is her imitation to the syllable model? (usually perfect imitations; usually very close; usually fairly close; not very close, but at least she makes some sound; does not try to imitate syllables)

d. Of the syllables the child imitates, how fast does her imitation follow the model? How long does it take before she imitates it? (usually imitates within a few seconds; usually imitates between 5 and 10 seconds later; usually says the syllable later that day; may say the syllable days later; does not imitate syllables)

e. How well does the child usually cooperate when you try to get her to imitate syllables? (pays attention and tries; pays attention sometimes and makes a half-hearted try; ignores you; puts up a fuss; never tried to get him to imitate syllables)

From your answers, above, *do we need to firm up sitting big, making eye contact, watching your movements, cooperating*?

f. In the space below, please list the syllables the child imitates well and often.

**VI9. THE CHILD IMITATES OR REPEATS SIMPLE *WORDS***

**THAT HE HEARS OR THAT YOU ASK HIM TO SAY.** For example, the child imitates words like mama, bye, eat, more, go, me, out, cookie, soda. (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a.How many simple words does the child usually and correctly imitate? (just about any simple word; more than thirty; between twenty and thirty; ten to twenty; between five and ten; a few; none really)

b.Of the simple words the child imitates, how regularly or often does he imitate them? (just about every time; more than half the time; once in a while; does not imitate words)

c.Of the simple words the child imitates, how well does he usually imitate them? How close is his imitation to the word model? (usually perfect imitations; usually very close; usually fairly close; not very close, but at least he makes some sound; does not try toimitate words)

d.Of the simple words the child imitates, how fast does his imitation follow the model? (usually imitates within a few seconds; usually imitates between 5 and 10 seconds later; usually says the word later that day; may say the word days later; does not imitate words)

e. How well does the child cooperate when you try toget him to imitate simple words? (pays attention and tries; pays attention sometimes and makes a half-hearted try; ignores you; puts up a fuss; never tried to get him to imitate words)  
 Do we need to firm up sitting big, making eye contact, watching your movements, cooperating?

f. In the space below, please list the words the child imitates well and often.

**VI10. THE CHILD IMITATES OR REPEATS *PHRASES* AND SIMPLE SENTENCES THAT SHE HEARS OR THAT YOU ASK HER TO SAY.** For example, the child imitates phrases and sentences like “Mama come,” “More food,” “Gimme a cookie,” “What’s that?” “That’s a ball.” (Circle as many as apply, and underline.)

a. How many phrases or sentences does the child usually and correctly imitate? (just about any phrase or sentence; more than thirty; between twenty and thirty; ten to twenty; between five and ten; a few; none really)

b. Of the phrases and sentences the child imitates, how regularly or often does she imitate them? (just about every time; more than half the time; once in a while; does not imitate phrases or sentences)

c. Of the phrases and sentences the child imitates, how well does she imitate them? How close is her imitation to the phrase or sentence model? (usually perfect imitations; usually very close; usually fairly close; not very close, but at least she makes some sound; does not try toimitate phrases or sentences)

d. Of the phrases or sentences the child imitates, how fast does the imitation follow the model? (usually imitates within a few seconds; usually imitates between 5 and 10 seconds later; usually says the phrase or sentence later that day; may say the phrase or sentence days later; does not imitate phrases or sentences)

e. How well does the child cooperate when you try to get her to imitate phrases or sentences? (pays attention and tries; pays attention sometimes and makes a half-hearted try; ignores you; puts up a fuss; never tried to get him to imitate phrases or sentences)  
 Do we need to firm up sitting big, making eye contact, watching your movements, cooperating?

f. In the space below, please list the phrases and sentences the child imitates well and often.

We want a child to imitate accurately and quickly. We also want the child to imitate *many* persons besides parents and teachers---brothers and sisters, other children, neighbors.

**VI11. THE CHILD IMITATES VERBAL MODELS OF MANY PEOPLE.**

a. Child imitates basic sounds of (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not imitate basic sounds yet).

b. Child imitates syllables of (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not imitate syllables yet).

c. Child imitates simple words of (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not imitate words yet).

d. Child imitates phrases and simple sentences of (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not imitate phrases and sentences yet).

e. Child uses sounds and word-like sounds (*Ow* for out; *AwG* for dog) to get things from or to point out things to (just about anyone; most people; only certain people; does not use word-like sounds to get things or point things out yet).

Okay, please look over your evaluation, above. Note which items (VI1-11) you need to work on; and note which features of each item (a, b, c, d, etc.) you need to work on. How often your child does a behavior? How many examples of a behavior (imitating sounds, syllables, words, phrases) your child needs to increase? How much your child sits big, pays attention, and cooperates? How quickly your child imitates? How hard your child tries to imitate? This will help us to pinpoint what to work on in the sections below.

**3. FIRMING UP SKILLS**

Let’s get ready to teach learn Verbal Imitation.

**Firming Your Teaching Tools.**

Time for review!  
1. Please seeFigure 3-1, Chapter Three, in the book on Learning Readiness. Skim the skills from Learning Readiness 1 to Learning Readiness 5 that prepare a child for Verbal Imitation.  
2. Skim the book on Motor Imitation, especially how to teach mouth movements and positions.3. Review teaching methods in the book on Learning Readiness.  
 a. Chapter Seven, section 3, Teaching With Model-Lead-Test/Check-Tag and Reinforce Or Correct.  
 b. Chapter Eleven, section 3, Quick Review of Teaching.  
 c. Chapter Nine, section 1, Clear Communication; section 2, Choosing and Using Examples; and section 3, Choosing and Using Add-ons.

**Firming the Child’s Skills**

Let’s firm (1) Learning Readiness and (2) Motor Imitation skills needed to learn Verbal Imitation. Then in section 4 we’ll ease a child into Verbal Imitation (VI1-6). In section 5, we’ll teach Verbal Imitation of sounds, syllables, words, and phrases.

Earlier Behaviors to Review, Practice, Firm, and Reinforce

Table 1, below, is Ma and Pa Rogers’s plan for practicing and firming Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills that will help son Steven learn Verbal Imitation.

**Table 1. How We Will Firm Steven’s Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation Skills**

We picked behaviors/skills to firm up from Table 3-1 in the book on Learning Readiness. This will be easy because we’ve already taught these skills. For a couple of weeks we will (1) give Steven more opportunities to do these behaviors in sessions and in everyday activities; (2) reinforce these behaviors often (with praise, hugs, and activities) when Steven does them on request or on his own; and (3) use tag-treat-verify to strengthen weak behaviors.

**1. Here are teaching methods we will use.**

1. *Reinforce-verify* earlier behaviors---such as   
 a. Steven responding to changes around him---like an airplane overhead, a truck going by, a new food in the store (“Look, Steven! Orange ice cream! Orange!”), animals on TV—by turning to look or listen, or telling about what happened. “Truck!”  
 b. Spontaneous eye contact and eye contact on request.  
 c. Watching what is going on, such as sister putting on her coat or Dad cooking.  
 d. Quiet Mouth. For example, when he stops making noises during a noisy afternoon.

e. Cooperation with requests, such as to come to us, put things away, walk with us.  
 f. Small and Large Motor movements that he has trouble with, such as walking sideways or climbing stairs.

g. Short routines---stacking things, putting things away, playing.  
 h. Good sitting with us.  
 i. Good sounds and words, instead of noises and pointing.  
   
 We will reinforce (praise, hugs, activities) and on an intermittent (pretty often) schedule. “Yes, you are WATCHING the truck!”  
   
 We will tag-treat (fruit, a lick on a lollipop)-verify when Steven does the *weakest* behaviors---such as Quiet Mouth for 10 or more seconds on a “noisy” day, Good Sounds and Words (such as “More apple,” “Momma come”), and doing short routines, such as stacking grocery items on shelves or fitting utensils in the right slots.

2. Switch among reinforcers---treats, big hugs, head rubs, play, activities.   
3. Keep giving Steven LOTS of opportunities to do earlier behaviors---come to us, imitate (“Steven, do this!”---lift one leg, clap hands, bounce ball), respond to gestures, sit, make eye contact, cooperate, play.  
4. We will be alert for when Steven DOES earlier behaviors---like coming to us and sitting, putting paper in the trash, walking calmly in stores. We will build on these---play session, reading a book, helping us shop.

5. We will move to natural reinforcers. For example,  
 a. We will use Grandma’s Law more often. “As soon as you (turn off the water, get your jammies, put on your coat), you can (get in the tub, read a story with me, go outside).”  
 b. Teach Steven to USE earlier-taught behaviors during everyday activities. For example,  
 (1) Follow simple requests to help in the kitchen, make eye contact, watch what we are doing (“Look! I am STIRRING soup. Come, help me DO STIRRING soup.”), and motor skills (reaching, grasping, moving, stirring).   
 (2) Looking at things when we are in the car or out in public. “Look (point). See the duck in the water.”   
6. We will “stop the action” so that Steven does a behavior to get something he wants. For instance, Steven will make eye contact, or say a sound, or stand calmly for 5 seconds, before we open the garage door so he can get his bike.   
7. We’ll start a token system for certain behaviors. One token each time he picks up something and puts it away. We will leave some things out of place---such as a piece of trash on the floor or utensils on the table. We will prompt him to put these away by telling him or pointing, and modeling how. Later, we will fade out the request and just make a pointing gesture. When he gets five tokens, he can pick what he wants to do.

**2. Here’s how we will firm up Steven’s Learning Readiness Skills.**We got these from Table 3-1 in the book on Learning Readiness. *We made a list of skills and, for each one, we thought of examples for Steven*. Easy!!

1. *Spontaneous Eye Contact (LR1.2) and Eye Contact On Request (LR1.3)--* Chapter Twelve in the Learning Readiness book.  
 a. We will be on the look-out for when Steven makes eye contact, even for one second. We’ll say “Hi, Honey” and smile. Or, “I see your eyes!” Then we will “hold out” for slightly longer eye contacts before we reinforce.   
 b. Around 10 times a day, we will say, “Steven, look at (Momma, Dad, brother, sister)” when eye contact would be a natural behavior. For example, when he sits down to eat and looks like he wants mashed potatoes, or wants to go outside.  
 We will also request eye contact before we ask him to do something. For instance, “Steven, look at me…. Yes, you are LOOKING at my eyes… Please OPEN the door for Dad.”  
2. *Eye Contact to Get Natural Rewards (LR1.4)--*The section on LR1.4, in Chapter Twelve in the book on Learning Readiness.  
 Whenever Steven makes eye contact to get our attention, or makes eye contact and then asks for something or takes our hand, we will verify and if possible give him what he wants.   
 When Steven looks like he wants something, or when he asks for something, we will first request eye contact. “Look at me, Steven… Yes, what do you want?”  
3. *Behavior Is Reinforced/Rewarded By Some Kinds Of Social Contact (LR1.5*)--Chapter Twelve in the book on Learning Readiness.  
 We will use praise, hugs, activity rewards, and verifications that “light” Steven up. “YES, you put the toy IN the box!”   
 We will follow verifications, praise, and activity rewards with something that already IS a reinforcer. For example, praise and then treat; praise and then a hug; “Yes, you put ON your coat” 🡪 Then go outside.   
4. *Quiet Mouth And Good Sounds/Words (LR1.6)--*Chapter Thirteen in the book on Learning Readiness.  
 Steven sometimes makes weird noises, instead of words, when he is playing or sitting around. So, we’ll go back to tag-reinforcing:

a. Longer intervals of Quiet Mouth; and

b. Good sounds/words in these situations. “Yes, the plane goes UP!”  
5. *Cooperation With Requests And Gestures (LR1.7)*-- Chapter Fourteen in the book on Learning Readiness.

We’ll keep track of Steven’s cooperation for a few days---how many times we make requests and how many times he cooperates. If it is still high---like 80 percent of the time---great! If it has slacked off---like only 50 percent of the time---we willincrease it again, by making a bunch of simple requests spread out during the day (come and sit with us, get a bowl, turn on a light) and give big reinforcement (reading a story, ice cream, playing with him outside) when he cooperates. If he ignores the request he misses out.  
 When his cooperation increases, again, we will focus on cooperating with **gestures**, such as to come or to pick something up--Chapter Fourteen, sections 6 and 7, in the book on Learning Readiness.   
6. *Looking at Objects, Parts of the Body, Face, Mouth (LR3.18*)---We will review items LR3.14-LR3.18 in Chapter Sixteen in the book on Learning Readiness, so that it will be easier for Steven to imitate our models.  
 For example, we’ll tour the house and point-touch-name things, and have Steven repeat this. And we’ll have him look at our face as we make mouth movements, open and close our eyes, or smile. We will tell what we are doing. We will also:

a. Praise and verify when Steven looks at our mouth while we are talking. “Yes, see my mouth.” (point-touch).

b. Repeat good sounds/words that he says, and reinforce if he looks at our mouth when we repeat his sounds.   
 c. If he makes a sound and looks at our mouth at the same time (as if he is waiting for us to talk back) we will tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes, you said *FfffUuuu.*” (for food).  
7. *Child Moves Her Body In Response to Our Model or In Response to Our Request (“Do This” Or “Arm Up!”) Plus a Model (LR1.7*)  
 We worked on simple Motor Imitation in Section 7 of Chapter Fourteen in the book on Learning Readiness, and in the book on Motor Imitation. Now we will:  
 a. Firm up Steven’s Motor Imitation by *practicing models we worked on earlier*---standing up, raising arms, pat-a-cake, touching objects, jumping.  
 b. And we will *teach him new* Large and Small Motor movements (walking backwards, tapping the table, touching his teeth and lips and jaw, stacking things), and then we will teach him to imitate when we *model* these movements. We want imitation to be real easy for him (fluent), so that it will be easier for him to imitate mouth movements and positions, and sounds and words.

**3. Here’s how we’ll firm Steven’s Motor Imitation Skills needed to learn Verbal Imitation.**We’ll review models that we recently worked on in the book on Motor Imitation, and add a few more! Easy*.*  
1. *The Child Correctly Imitates Movements Of The Mouth Or Mouth Positions (MI4).* We will teach different mouth movements and positions the same way we taught large and small motor imitation.a. We’ll practice models in front of a mirror so that our mouth and sound *models are clear!!* b. We’ll start sessions with familiar tasks---puzzles, stacking, etc.---so that Steven is *rolling and successful.* c. We’ll make sure that he is *looking* at our mouth.d. We’ll *name* the mouth movement or position when we show the model and as Steven imitates it. “Steven, look. Do this…OPEN mouth (prompt). Open. Look again. Open. Your turn. OPEN mouth. [Physical prompt.] Tag-treat-Yes, OPEN!!”  
 e. We’ll add a small physical prompt if needed. We’ll keep showing him the mouth movement or position *while we prompt* him to do it.  
 f. Tag-reinforce and verify imitations that are at Steven’s *point of success*. For example, if he closes his lips for the *Mmm* sound, but not all the way, we’ll tag and reinforce it. We’ll repeat this a few more times and tag- reinforce improvements.   
 f. We’ll do the same model only up to three times in a row if Steven makes errors or if his imitation is WAY off. *Three try rule!* Then we’ll switch. If he has trouble just making the movements, we’ll *practice these movements* and then come back to imitating the movements.   
 g. We’ll slowly *fade out* prompts (such as helping him to move his mouth) as he gets better at doing the movements, but we’ll keep giving praise and verifications with punch. “YES! Mmmm. You are a good talker!”  
 h. We’ll try to *teach him to prompt himself with his fingers.* For example, holding his lips for the Mmmm sound.  
 i. We’ll use a mirror to show him our model and what HIS imitations look like. We’ll have Steven look at his OWN mouth after we show the model. “Yes. You are OOOPENING your mouth.” He’ll like this!  
 j. We’ll work on one movement a few times and then switch to another. Every few days, we’ll add one or two mouth movements and practice the old ones.  
 k. We’ll have one or two short sessions a day. We’ll also work on these models during everyday activities. For example, imitating closed lips (for Mmmm) before we give him mmmmore mmmmashed potatoes.

Thanks Ma and Pa Rogers! Please use Table 2 to make your own list of Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills that you will firm up for a few weeks before you work on Verbal Imitation. Think of examples of each skill to work on.   
**You could use Ma and Pa Rogers’ plan as a model for your plan. *Do the same things*, but with examples from your family!**

**Table 2. How We Will Firm Our Child’s Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation Skills**

**A. Here are the teaching methods we will use.**

1. Reinforcers will be….

Behaviors to tag-reinforce will be….

Behaviors to get the most reinforcement will be….

2. Ways we might prompt behavior.

3. Where we’ll firm behaviors. Opportunities.

a. Sessions.

b. Everyday activities.

c. “Stopping the action” and requiring a behavior before child can go on.

**B. How we will firm up our child’s Learning Readiness Skills.**

1. Behaviors/skills. How we will firm them, using methods in A., above.

a.

b.

c.

d.

**C. How we’ll firm more of our child’s Motor Imitation Skills needed to learn Verbal Imitation.**

1. Motor Imitation behaviors. How we will firm them.

a. Already worked on.

b. New ones, such as mouth   
 movements and positions.

Okay, so read the next section to see what we’ll do next; then use your plan, above, for a few weeks; and then come back and we’ll DO section 4.

**4.** **EASING YOU AND THE CHILD INTO VERBAL IMITATION (VI1-6)**

By the time you work on this section, the child should be firm on the Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation behaviors that will help her to learn Verbal Imitation. Now we’ll *ease* the child into Verbal Imitation (items VI7-11) by practicing basic skills (VI1-6). You can firm these during short sessions, play and leisure activities, and everyday routines. It will take a couple of weeks.

MOUTH MOVEMENTS AND POSITIONS.

Here are tips for teaching and practicing mouth movements and positions used when we talk.

**1. Breathing**. If the breathing movements below are new to a child, it may take a while to get used to doing them. Go slowly, prompt, and tag-reinforce small improvements. Here are some breathing movements to work on.

Breathing *in* and *out* through the *mouth.*

Breathing *in* and *out* through the *nose.*

Breathing *in* through the *mouth* and *out* through the *nose.*

Breathing *in* through the *nose* and *out* through the *mouth.*

Say something like, “Let’s play IN and OUT. (frame. Use whatever words work for you.) Watch. IIIIinnnn….Ouuuut. Again…. IIInnnn….Ouuuut… (model). Now you do IN and OUT with me… Get ready…..IIIiiiinnnn. Now Ouuuuut.” (lead). Do this a few times, and then, “Your turn to do IN and OUT aaaallll by yourself. Get ready….Iiinnnnn. Yes, you did INnnn. Now Ouuut…” (Test/check).

You can prompt these movements by (1) Saying “IIInnnn” and “Ouuut”; (2) pushing *in* and *up* on the child’s tummy; (3) holding a strip of tissue paper or a pinwheel in front of her and your mouth or nose to show the air coming out; and (4) *gently* holding her mouth or nose closed a little to help the air come out the other one.

**2. Blowing.** Blowing might be a little easier than the breathing movements. Some blowing movements to practice are:

a. Blowing a strip of tissue paper hanging in front of the child’s mouth.

b. Blowing candles.

c. Blowing a soap bubble pipe.

d. Blowing a toy pinwheel.

e. Blowing bubbles through a straw in a glass of soapy water.

Remember to show the child how to do these movements (model them) before you ask him to try them with you (lead), and then on his own (test/check). Pushing *in* and *up* on his tummy is a good prompt for blowing. You can even model how to “Tummy in, blow out!” Remember to tag-reinforce instantly! *The child should hear the tag WHILE he’s making the movement.*

**3. Jaw Movements**. Jaw movements are fairly easy to see and do, but it may take a few days for the child to get used to doing them. Take it slowly, and use lots of praise. Here are some jaw movements to practice.

a. Opening the mouth *wide.* This will help with the *Ah* sound. When he opens his mouth wide, *tag-reinforce-verify* (“Yes, *Ahhh.*”) *any sound close to Ahhh that comes out.*

b. Opening the mouth wide and closing it.

c. Moving the jaw right and left. Prompt this by gently holding his lower jaw and moving it while you model how.

d. Closing the mouth so that the front teeth are edge to edge. Prompt this by spreading his lips at the corners and moving his jaw so that the front teeth come together on edge. This position looks like a grin.

As always, (1) Frame the task. “Let’s play OPEN mouth (model), CLOSE mouth.” (model). (2) Model open and close again and name the movements. (3) Have the child open and close with you a few times (lead). (4) Have the child try it on her own (test/check). (5) Tag-reinforce *any* open and close mouth response at first. (6) For *closer* tries, you could say, “Good try. The tag point is (OPEN WIDE or CLOSE LIPS TOUCH). Try again….”; and (7) Tag-treat-verify when the child opens wider and closes tighter.

**4. Lip Movements.** *Many sounds use little movements of the lips; for example, Mmm, B, P, Fff, Vvv, Ooo* (book)*, and Wh.* So, give the child practice on the movements below. Here’s how.

a. Frame the task. “Let’s play (Lips tight, Lip out, Lips pop… or whatever words work for you).”

b. Model the lip movement several times. “Watch…Lips TIGHT… Again… Lips TIGHT.”

c. Have the child do a lip movement with you a few times (lead).

d. Have the child try it on her own. (test/check). “Your turn. … Lips TIGHT.”

e. Tag-reinforce any close responses at first.

f. For closer tries, you could say, “Good try. The tag point is (LIPS TIGHT, LIPS POP). Try again…..”

g. Tag-treat-verify when the child does the movement at the tag point.

Here are examples.

a. Making the lips *round.* This is for the *Ohh* (note), *Ooo* (book),and *Uuuu* (tune) sounds. Prompt this by putting your thumb and forefinger at the corners of his mouth and pushing the lips slightly toward the center. After a few days’ practice, try to get him to imitate *Uuuu* when his lips are in the rounded position. Reward any sound that comes out.

b. Sticking out the lips *together;* like pouting. Prompt this by putting your thumbs and forefingers near the corners of his mouth and gently squeezing his lips together and out.

c. Sticking out the *lower lip.* Prompt this by gently pulling or “teasing” the lower lip down and out.

d. Sticking out the *upper* lip. Prompt this by gently pulling or “teasing” the upper lip up and out.

e. Spreading lips *wide* apart with the teeth closed, like a big grin. Prompt by spreading his lips wide at the comers with your thumb and forefinger and moving his jaw with your other hand so that his teeth are shut.

f. Flapping the lips fast (sounds like a motor boat--*B-B-B-B*). Prompt this by having him blow. Then wiggle his lips up and down with your finger.

g. Closing the lips and blowing through them. Prompt this by gently closing his lips while pushing *in* and *up* on his tummy.

Teach this using model-lead-test/check-tag or praise-verify, as shown in 1-4, above.

**5. Tongue Movements.** The tongue helps make sounds like *T*, *Th*, *S*, *Sh*, *L*, *G*, *K*, *D*, and *N.* Make sure to practice the tongue movements below.

a. Hold a lollipop or spoonful of her favorite dessert in front of her mouth and have her *reach* for it with her tongue. First teach her to stick her tongue *out.* Then teach her to move her tongue to the *left* and *right, up* and *down.*  
 b. Dry her tongue with a tissue and hold it with your fingers. Then move it from side to side. Do not force her. Later, try to have her *imitate* these movements without the prompt.  
 c. Teach him to put his tongue way *back* into his mouth by touching the tip of his tongue with your finger or with an ice cube. This will help him with the *G* and *K* sounds. After you do this for a few days, try to prompt him to say or imitate *G o*r *K*. Help him to hold his tongue still and *flat* in his mouth by gently pushing it down with your finger, a tongue depressor, or an ice pop stick).

d. Teach him to *lift* the *tip* of his tongue by holding his lower jaw open, and when it is open, touch his upper lip with a lollipop or lift up his tongue with a tongue depressor. Prompt him to touch the *edge* of his upper teeth (for the *Th* sound) and to touch just *behind* his upper teeth (for the *Ll* and *T* sounds). When he can do this pretty well, prompt him to say *Th, T, or Lll* while his tongue is in the right place.

e. Have him learn to chew, lick, and suck on large lollipops and pretzel sticks for practice on lip, jaw, and tongue movements.

Make sure to TAG-reinforce when your child TRIES to do these movements (the first tag point) and as she improves!!   
 At first. Tag-(hug, tiny treat)-“Yes, you stuck your tongue OUT!”….

Later. Tag-(hug, tiny treat)—Yes, you stuck your tongue WAAYYY OUT.”

When your child is pretty good at skills 1-5, above, build on them with number 6. This will help your child to imitate basic sounds, in Section 5.

**6. Making “quick and quiet” sounds for what are called “stop sounds”**---consonants, such as *P*, *D*, *K*, *T*, *J*, *G, Q* (the sound is *KW*), *X* (the sound is *KS*). Please remember that   
 These are SOUNDS.   
 Not letters.

We’re not trying to teach the child to **read** words like quick and xray. We’re teaching the child the **sounds** that she would use if she SAID quick and xray.

Now, ***we don’t want your child to say BUh or DUh or KUh or TUh!*** No, we want a quick and quiet B, *P*, *D*, *K*, *T*, *J*, *G, Q* (*KW*), *X* (*KS*). ***Almost a whisper.*** If your child adds *Uh* to these stop sounds, then her words will be *EeTUh*, not eat, or *KUhAhTUh*, not cat. Then we’d have to RETEACH these sounds!   
 So now, start teaching your child to make quick and quiet consonant sounds with **quick and quiet mouth movements*.***  
 “Let’s say *B..B..B..B…*” [Almost a whisper!]Gently close her lips, or put your finger over her lips as in “shshsh.” You do the same. Then poke her tummy, stroke her chin, look at a funny picture (a fish blowing bubbles), or sing to get her started, or just model *B..B..B..B…* Then release her lips so the sound comes out. Tag-treat-“YES *B..B..B.*”  
 When your child says ONE stop sound well (easier ones are probably *P* and *B---*just close and open lips), add another. We’ll use this skill in section 6.

Now, here are some *elements* of Verbal Imitation (VI1-VI6) to teach before we work on imitating sounds, words, phrases and sentences (VI7-VI11).

TEACHING THE CHILD TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE SPEECH OF OTHERS (VI1)

The child should watch how others move their mouths when speaking. One way to teach this is to *talk to yourself (self-talk) in his presence.* So, when the child is near you, *talk about what you are doing. Use simple words and phrases.* For example, in the kitchen, you might say:

CUP ... WASH CUP ... PUT CUP HERE ... GLASS ... PICK UP GLASS ... WATER ... WATER IN GLASS ... DRINK WATER .. . WIPE GLASS ... GLASS DOWN ... CHAIR ... MOVE CHAIR .. . CHAIR UNDER TABLE ... WIPE TABLE.

This may seem a little silly. But if you have other children you probably did the same thing when they were learning to talk. That is one way they learned *how* to say simple words, learned what words *mean* (water, glass, wipe), and *when* to use them (push chair 🡪 goes under).

If the child *watches* when you are *self-talking,* if he *says a sound or word* (wipe),or if he *imitates* your movements (wiping), tag-reinforce-verify (“Yes, wipe.”) with praise,a hug, a soft touch, or even a treat at first. *And help the child to join the activity*. “Now YOU wipe!” The idea is *not* to push him to talk at this point. It is to give many chances to hear *simple* talk about everyday things and be *rewarded* for paying attention towhat you say and do. Have *other persons* self-talk when they are with the child, too.

Continue self-talking after you start on imitating sounds, words, and phrases, so that the child will pick up new words and learn when touse them.

TEACHING THE CHILD TO MAKE SOUNDS ON HIS OWN (VI2-VI5)

Use the methods below for a few days to a week or so before you start on Verbal Imitation of sounds, syllables, or words.

WHAT SOUNDS DOES THE CHILD MAKE ON HIS OWN, AND HOW OFTEN DOES HE MAKE THEM (VI2)?

First, take a *baseline* on the sounds the child makes *on his own*. Set aside an hour or so each day for 3 days. When the child makes a *speech sound* on his own (not clicking with his tongue, whining, or other noises) write it on a note pad (*Eee*, *Mmm*) and put a hash mark *(/*) next to it. Section 6, Teaching Basic Sounds, shows how to write sounds. Every time the child *repeats* a sound you wrote down on the pad, put another hash mark *(/*) next to it. When he makes a *new* sound that is not yet on the pad, write it down.

Here is Mom Ironton’s note pad after three days.

*Baseline Day 1 Baseline Day 2 Baseline Day 3*

3:00 to 4:00 P.M. 8:00 to 9:00 A.M. 12:00 to 1:00 P.M.

*Ee: //// Ee: /// BAh-BAh ////*

*Ee-Ah /// Uh: ///// GAh: ////*

*BAh: //// BAh: /// DUh-DUh: //*

*BAh-BAh: /// MAh-MAh //// MAh-MAh-MAh: ///*

*Ah-Ee: // GAh: /// Ee-Ah: /////   
 MAh-MAh: ////*

How many *times* did Pearl makes *sounds---any* sounds---on Day 1? Just count the hash marks---twenty times. How many times on Day 2?

And which *different basic sounds* did Pearl make? On Day 1 she used *Ee, Ah, B,* and *M.* Everything he said was made out of those four *basic sounds.* Did she say any *other basic sounds* on Day 2 or Day 3? Yes. On Day 2 she said *Uh* and G. And on Day 3 she said *D*. So, what *different basic sounds* did Pearl say during the baseline? They are underlined in the table above. *Ee, Ah, B, M, Uh,* G, and *D.* Everything she said came from these seven basic sounds.

Now you take a baseline for 3 days and keep track of the child’s sounds as Ma Ironton did above. Then come back here….

By now, you have a good idea of the *different basic sounds* the child says and *how often* he says sounds on his own. Let’s update the list you made for item VI2 in section 2, on evaluation, above. Turn to the Speech Table for Verbal Imitation and Functional Speech at the end of this book. It will help you to keep track of the child’s progress all through the Verbal Imitation and Functional Speech areas.

The Speech Table is divided into weeks, and each week is divided into basic sounds, words, phrases, and sentences. On the far *right*-hand side is a column to write the sounds, words, phrases, or sentences that need the most work. Since the Speech Table covers only 3 weeks, make copies of it.

Use the column on the far *left* to list basic sounds the child made during the baseline days. Just write down the *different basic sounds* he said on his own. For example, if the child said *Ee, Ah, B,* and *M* during the first day of the baseline, also said *G* the second day, and said *F* the third day, your baseline list on the Speech Table would be *Ee, Ah, B, M, G*, and *F.*

Please write the child’s baseline list of sounds on the Speech Table now….

You also know *how often* the child said sounds each baseline session. You made a hash mark each time. If the child made sounds only once in a while, we need to *increase* the number of times. Even if he made sounds often during the baseline, he needs to learn that making sounds has an *effect* on the scene around him. In other words, *he needs to find out that making sounds is rewarded*.

So, there are two things to do now: (1) teach the child tomake sounds on his own *often;* and (2) teach him tomake *different* sounds.

HOW TO TEACH THE CHILD TO MAKE DIFFERENT SOUNDS ON HIS OWN, OFTEN (VI3)

A child is more likely to say *something* when we give her a sound or word model to imitate if we *first* increase the number of sounds the child makes and how often she makes them. Here is our method.

FOR A FEW DAYS TO A WEEK BEFORE YOU START WORKING ON VERBAL IMITATION, TAG-REINFORCE-VERIFY MOST TIMES SHE MAKES A SPEECH SOUND.

At first, use *strong reinforcers* that you can give *fast;* for example, bites of food. Click the tagger and run across the room if you have to. And *repeat* (verify) the sound She just made, for example, “Yes, *Ee*!” If she tries to repeat the sound after you, tag-reinforce-verify again.

Do this *as much as you can* during the day and during sessions. Teach the child that saying sounds has nice *consequences;* it gets rewards. During sessions, you might be working on Small Motor activities or Motor Imitation (especially Mouth Positions). Repeat the sound and reinforce most times the child says a speech sound.

If the child rarely makes sounds on her own, get her started by bouncing her on your knee, poking her tummy, talking, reading, or singing to her, playing music, or just about anything that will get a sound out of her. Reinforce the behavior fast when she makes a sound. When she starts making sounds more often, fade out these prompts.

Does this sound easy? It is. It’s the same method we used for increasing

spontaneous eye contact, in Chapter Twelve in the book on Learning Readiness. *But there is one catch.* Some children will start making the *same sound over and over.* For example, if you reinforce when they say *DAh*, they just repeat *DAh* again and again. And the more you reinforce *DAh*,the more say it and the less they say *other* sounds. How can we teach a child to say *different sounds--*maybe even a few *new* ones--and not just repeat one or two? The answer is this.

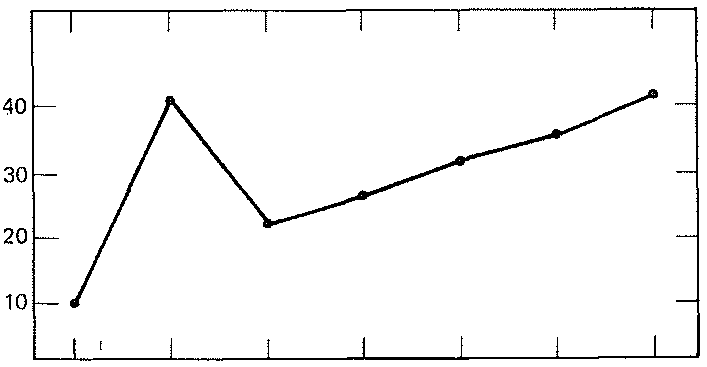
1. When a child begins to make sounds more often (in a few days), switch to a *variable, Intermittent Schedule---*so that sounds are reinforced after about two, three, or four sounds.

2. Keep an ear open for *new sounds* he may say, and reinforce them.

3. If he keeps repeating the same sounds, and uses other sounds less and less, *stop* reinforcing these same sounds and *wait* for him to say *something else.* Then tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes, *Ffffff*!”

*During sessions and for one hour a day, write on a note pad the different sounds the child says, and make a hash mark each time she says the sound,* just as you did during the baseline. Use the second column in the Speech Table to list the sounds she says this week. Your goals are to (1) increase *how often* she says sounds on her own to about *two per minute* (less outside of sessions); and (2) increase the number of *different sounds* she says to at least five *before you start on Verbal Imitation* (imitation of sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences).

Figure 1 shows how fast you can increase how often a child makes sounds on his own. The chart was made by Jimmy’s mother. She ran three sessions a day for 20 minutes and reinforced with praise or a small bite of candy every time Jimmy made a speech sound. She reinforced Jimmy’ sounds as often as she could during the day, with praise, candy, and Activity Rewards (going outside). The chart shows sounds Jimmy made outside of sessions. His mother counted the number of times he made sounds for 1 hour each day.

Number of Times 

Child Made Speech   
 Sounds on His Own

Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat. Sun. Mon. Tues.  
 Figure 1. Jimmy makes sounds on his own.

BABBLING (VI4)

Item VI4, in our evaluation, above, asks how the child makes sounds. Does he make short “bursts” of sound like *Eeee-Ahhh*?Or does he put many sounds together, as if he liked to hear himself or was “talking” but without using words; for example, *GAh-GAh-MAh-DAh-BEe-BEe*? *When you reward the child for making sounds, try to get him to make long streams of sounds (babbling).* You want him to enjoy hearing and making sounds. The more he babbles, the more practice he gets using his mouth and voice.

There are two ways to do this.

1. When he makes a sound, *keep him doing it* by repeating his sounds back to him, picking him up, or bouncing him on your knee.

2. Increase the number of sounds a child makes one after the other by rewarding him (reinforcing the behavior) *only after he has put more and more sounds together.* For example, at first you would reward him (reinforce the behavior) even if all he said was *Eee* or *BUh.* The more you reinforce these short sounds, the more sounds he is going to make. And some of them are going to be close together. So, after a few days, tag-reinforce only sounds that he says *close together.* Slowly, hold out for longer and longer streams of sounds.

IMITATING HIS SOUNDS (VI5)

All the while we are tag-reinforcing the child’s sounds, we will be *repeating* back to him (verifying) what he says. Tag-treat + “Yes, Rrrrr..” *Make sure to reward him if he repeats what you said.* This is one way to ease a child into Verbal Imitation. If he starts imitating or trying to imitate what you repeat back to him, it will be easier to teach him to imitate other sounds. Remember to *underline* on the Speech Table any sound the child is imitating.

TEACHING THE CHILD TO MAKE EYE CONTACT AND A SOUND AT THE SAME TIME TO GET THINGS HE WANTS (VI6)

The child should already make eye contact to get natural rewards. During this week his sounds should be increasing. So now help him to *link up* eye contact and sounds.

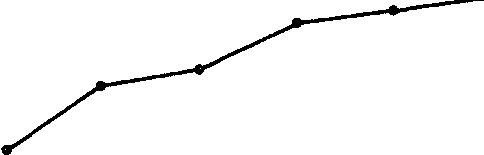
In daily life, we do not walk around staring at people and making sounds. We *use* eye contact and sounds (talking) to get things we want. Even if the child does not talk yet, teach him to use eye contact and sounds in the normal way, *as if he could talk.*

The method for *linking* eye contact and sounds is easy. First, reward the child whenever he looks at you and makes a sound at the same time. Second, and more important, *wait until he makes eye contact and makes a sound before you give him things he wants.* For example, when he wants an apple, wait until he makes eye contact, and then wait a few more seconds for him to “ask” by making a sound. If he holds his gaze and makes a sound, *repeat* the sound back to him, praise him, and give him the apple. If he makes eye contact but does not say a sound to go with it, *prompt* by saying, “**Tell** me what you want,” “**Ask** me for it,” or, “**Say** ‘APPLE.’” *If he holds his gaze and says any sound, tag-reinforce-verify it.*

At first, reward him for holding his gaze and saying *any* sound to “ask” for what he wants, even if the sound is not close tothe right word. For example, at first it is all right if he uses *Ah* ask to go outside. But once he makes eye contact plus a sound toget what he wants, *hold out* for a sound that is *a little closer* to the right word. Instead of letting him go outside when he looks at you and says *Ah,* tell him, “Good try. Listen again….OUT.” If he tries to say “Out” or anything like it, let him go outside.

So, as much as you can during the week or two before you start on Verbal Imitation, have the child make eye contact and a sound to get things he wants. Do not “push” him to make the right sounds yet. We will work on that later. Start with the sounds you listed for item VI6 in the evaluation, above.

Figure 2 shows how Jimmy Maretti learned to make eye contact and a sound at the same time with his mother. During afternoon sessions, they worked on Small Motor activities. Jimmy was given puzzle pieces only when he made eye contact and a sound to “ask for” the puzzle pieces. When he was working at the activities, if he made eye contact with his mother and then a sound, he got praise and a bite of food. Sessions were from 45 to 60 minutes. Figure 2 shows the *rate* of Jimmy’s behavior (the number of times he made eye contact and a sound at the same time, divided by the number of minutes in the session). Actually, he made eye contact and a sound at the same time 63 times the first day and 117 times the last day.

 Times per   
 Minute Child   
 Made Eye  
 Contact and a  
 Sound at the

 Same Time

Figure 2. Jimmy makes eye contact and a sound at the same time to “ask.”

CHAINING (HOOKING UP) MOTOR IMITATION AND VERBAL IMITATION

One last way to *ease* a child into Verbal Imitation is to link it up to Motor Imitation. When you are working on Motor Imitation, have the child “warm up” with a few Small Motor and Mouth Position models. Then add a *sound* for him to imitate---a sound the child *already says* often on his own.   
 For example, have him imitate some motor models one at a time and then have him imitate a sound model.

*Parent or Teacher Child*

1. “Do this” (raises arm) Raises arm

2. “Do this” (claps hands) Claps hands

3. “Do this” (opens mouth wide) Opens mouth wide

4. While child’s mouth is still open,

says *Ah* Repeats *Ah*

Go back and forth this way between *motor* and *sound* models.

Another way is to show the child a short sequence of models that has one sound model in it. For example:

*Parent or Teacher Child*

Says, “Do this.”

Stands up.  
 Says, *Ah.*  
 Sits down again. Stands up, says *Ah* and sits down.

Go through sets of models like this a few times during sessions and at other times of the day.

**Summary of Ways to Ease a Child into Verbal Imitation**

Here is what to do for a week or so before we start on Verbal Imitation.

1. Firm up Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills listed above.

2. When the child is near you, *talk to yourself* about what you are doing and reward him for looking at you or imitating you.

3. Take a *baseline* on how often the child makes sounds on his own and which sounds he says. Then *tag-reinforce-verify when he says sounds on his own. Strongly reinforce when he makes different sounds.* List the sounds he used during the baseline in the left-hand column of the Speech Table. Also, list in the second column of the Speech Table the sounds he said the NEXT week when you reinforced making sounds.

4. As the days go by, *tag-reinforce saying more and more* *sounds that are closer together.* Instead of reinforcing *Eeee* or *BAh,* wait for longer streams like *Eeee-Ah-BAh-BAh.*

5. *Repeat* the child’s sounds back to him. Reward when he imitates the sounds you just repeated.

6. Have the child make *eye contact and a sound at the same time* before he gets natural rewards.

7. Work on *Motor Imitation* and *slip in a sound model.*

Begin the next sections when the child:  
1. Often makes eye contact, generally cooperates with requests, sits and interacts with you, is pretty easy to calm and doesn’t make much noise, is pretty firm on many Large and Small Motor skills, imitates basic mouth movements and positions (open mouth, close lips, stick out tongue).

2. Often pays attention when you and others speak.

3. Says at least five different sounds often.

4. Says some sounds close together in longer strings.  
5. Imitates some sounds you repeat back to him.  
6. Makes eye contact and a sound at the same time toget many things he wants.  
7. Starts toimitate a few sound models during Motor Imitation sessions.

If the child does not talk yet or needs help with many sounds, work on *basic sounds—*section 6*.* If he says many words but needs help with some of them, start with the section on *words,* but use the section on *basic sounds* to teach the ones he has trouble with.

**5. HOW TO TEACH VERBAL IMITATION**

Some children start Verbal Imitation with *sounds (M, B, Ah, Ee, F*). Others with *words* (mama, eat, ball). The best method is the same in both cases.

**How to Run Sessions**

We run sessions on Verbal Imitation the same way we ran sessions on Small Motor activities and Motor Imitation. Please see Chapter Sixteen, sections 1 and 2, of the book on Learning Readiness.

1. Do *some* teaching at the table.

2. Sit *close* enough to prompt and to tag-reinforce behavior. Sit either *across* from the child or next to her but facing her, so that she can see your face.

3. Start with 10- or 15-minute sessions; add more time as the child gets used to learning Verbal Imitation.

4. Remember: *sit-down sessions give a lot of practice in a short time*, but they do not teach her when and where in everyday life to *use* what she is learning to say. So, *do most teaching during natural activities*; for example, while you are playing with the child or reading to her, during meals, and when she wants things. Use Grandma’s Law A LOT outside of sessions. “As soon as you say TURN, I will TURN the page.”

5. When children do not say words yet, start working on Verbal Imitation during sessions on *other* skills; for example, Large and Small Motor activities and Motor Imitation. In other words, throw in a few verbal models during these sessions and gradually add more.

6. Use *strong* reinforcers. Praise with *punch*! If the child does not say words or has a hard time imitating, it may be best to use *food* (and praise)---during meals and snack time. Bites should be small, so the child will not fill up too quickly. And make it his favorite foods. Do not use the same food every day. Switch often. Also, the tag and reinforcer have to be **fast**, *so the child connects the sound she hears with what her voice is doing.* Be quick to praise or give a bite of food, or else you might reinforce the wrong sound or mouth movement.

7. You and the child need breaks. So, *work on several skills during sessions*. Rotate between Motor Imitation, Small and Large Motor activities, and Verbal Imitation. If you take a break from Verbal Imitation at the table for a few days, *still use Grandma’s Law a lot during the day for different words or sounds.*

**The Method for Teaching Verbal Imitation**

You don’t need to memorize the steps here! You’ll see them again in the later sections on how to teach sounds, words, phrases and sentences in later sections.

1. *Before each session, make a short list of sounds or words* to work on*.* Start with sounds or words that   
 a. The child *already* says---her point of success,

b. Are easy to *prompt.*

*c.* Are easy for her to *see. Ah, M, B, Uh, P,* and *F* are good to start with. Easy words are Mama, eat, more, out, bye, bee, up, cup, hat, cookie, meat, no, me, eye, and go.

d. The child can *use* in daily life; for example, names for foods, activities (play, bath, eat, sleep), places (out, bed), objects, parts of her body, and people.

Practice the sound or word models in front of a mirror before you work with the child.

2. *Sit across from the child or next to the child at an angle,* so she can see your face. *Wait* until she is *quiet* and *looking* at your mouth. Or *prompt* her by *telling* her to look, chucking her under the chin, or holding a small bite of food next to your lips.   
3. When she is calm, quiet, and looking at your mouth (maybe you’ll have to say, “Look” and point to your mouth), *show her the model* (sound or word) to imitate.  
4. *We’ll use our basic method: model-lead-test/check-tag-reinforce-verify.* We used this format for several months teaching Learning Readiness and Motor Imitation skills. Here is an example with sound imitation. Feel free to try your own words! Please act out the script!

a. *Gain attention.* “Watch my mouth…. (Point to your mouth.) Yes, watching my mouth.”   
b. *Model.* “Listen… New sound…(Point to your mouth.) *Mmmmmm*.” Drag it out so the child can hear and see it, and maybe join in.

Give the model SLOWLY *(Ahhhh, EeeeT*) and *clearly.* Open your mouth *wide,* pull your lipsback to show your teeth, and maybe *point* to your tongue or lips so that she *sees how* to make the sound or word.

c. *Lead.* “Say it **with** me….” Maybe at first add, “We’re going to say *Mmmmm.*”

A hand gesture may help.  
 Hold up your hand as a listen and ready signal. http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.png“Get ready.”… Drop your hand as a go signal. http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.png Child says *Mmmmm* with you???  
d. *Tag-reinforce-verify* **any** response at the child’s current point of success or better. At first, that might be **any** sound! “Yes, good try. *Mmmm.*” Try again for a better imitation.

“Again, say it with me. We’re going to say *Mmmmm.* http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.pngGet ready.” http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.png Child says….*Mmmmm.* Tag-reinforce-verify again.

If the child imitated *Mmmmm* with you well enough for starters, go to the next step---test/check.

e. *Test/check*

“**Your** (or Child’s name) turn! Listen… (hand up). **http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.png**  *Mmmmmm.*”Hand drop and/or “Go.” http://images.clipartpanda.com/hand-clipart-black-and-white-18689-hand-pointing-clip-art.png Child says *Mmmm.*

f. *Tag-treat-verify.* “Yes, *Mmmm*!”

g. *Repeat several times to firm it up.*   
 (1) Keep using the *lead* if seeing and hearing your model will help her to imitate. “Say it with me….*Mmmmm*.” or   
 (2) Use the *test/check* if your child is imitating more on her own. “Your turn. Say, *Mmmmm.*”

Please act out the script a few more times until you are firm!!

5. *Firming weak elements.* If the child has a hard time saying a sound or word *with* you (lead) or on her *own* (test/check), think of the weak elements. Firm them up. For example, the child might need focused practice (“part-firming”) on the following. Please try these and focus on the movements and positions.  
a. Mouth wide open, for *Ah*, *Oh.*b. Mouth open a little, for *Ee*, *N*, *S.*c. Lips together, for *Mmm*, *P, B.*d. Tongue behind upper teeth, for *T*, *L*, *S.*e. Tongue between teeth, for *TH.*f. Lips in a pout, for *Wh, U*, *Ooo*g. Closing lips and opening them quickly (“pop”) for *B*, *P.*h. Gently blowing air, for *Wh.*i. Lower lip touching upper teeth, for *F.*So, *firm these* ***parts*** *for a few* minutes *and then come* ***back*** *to the sound or word you were working on*. Here’s how for a sound. Pearl doesn’t imitate *Mmmm* because she doesn’t imitate closing her lips! So,  
a. First model the mouth position part. “Look. (Model) Lips closed. Like this.” Repeat a few times. “Look again. Lips clossssed.”

b. Lead. “Lips **closed** WITH me… (Physical prompt to help child to close her lips.) Yes, lips clooossssed…(Now test/check) Again, do lips clooosssed with me…. Yes, lips closed.” Tag-treat!  
c. Now do lips closed and **then** the sound model! “Listen… Lips closed…. Good! (Praise for doing lips closed.) Now say *Mmmm* with me… (Physical prompt if needed.) *Mmmm….*Yes, *Mmmm….* Again, say *Mmmm* with me…. *Mmmm…..* Yes, *Mmmm…..*”Praise, hug!d. Test/check. “Your turn… Lips closed…. Say *Mmmmm.* (Physical prompt?)… *Mmmmm….* Yes, you said *Mmmmm* all by yourself!” (Tag-treat)   
e. As you repeat the Test-check, fade out telling the child “Lips closed,” so that the child closes her lips **and** says *Mmmmm* after YOU show the model. Exaggerate your closed lips so she sees what to do.  
 “Your turn. Say *Mmmm.*” Big tag-treat when the child does this.

Don’t get discouraged! You may have to do this many times: (1) prompting lips closed; (2) then prompting the *Mmmm* sound; (3) then fading out prompting lips closed; (4) finally fading prompting lips closed plus *Mmmm* sound.

Please act this out!

Here’s an example with a word. When you model EAT, the child only repeats *Ee.* So, practice the *T sound* (“Say, *T*.”) till firm. Then go back to EA…T.  
6. *If the child still has a hard time, Stop!* Go back to sounds (or words) that she already imitates---to success and confidence. Practice a few of these and then try a new, EASY sound, such as *Ahhhh* or *Eeeee*, or an easy word, such as *MAhhh* or *MEeee. Once she has a bunch of firm sound or word imitations under her belt, go back to the ones she had trouble with.* Practice elements first---such as looking at your model and mouth movements and positions.

7. Remember, you can use prompts and “add-ons” during the Model, Lead, and Test/check steps. For instance,  
a. Say, “Watch my mouth”; “Listen again…”

b. Exaggerate your mouth movements and positions.  
c. Point to your own mouth.  
d. Gently help the child to put her lip, jaw, and/or tongue in the right position.

e. Pause and punch, such as “Get ready to say *Mmmmm* with me… (Pause for two seconds, then do the hand signal for “Go.”) *Mmmmmm*.”

f. Remind the child of the sound. “We’ll say *Rrrrrr.*” Or, “Say, *Mmmmm.*”

See Chapter Nine in the book on Learning Readiness for more extras.  
 At first, we’ll tag-and reinforce just about any response, even when prompted. 8. As the child’s point of success increases (she correctly imitates more sounds, faster, or more on her own), we tag-reinforce-and verify these improved responses (which are now the new tag point). But we still give **some** reinforcement to pretty good tries. For example, “Good try.” “Yes, *Rrrrr.*” But then we try again for a better or less-prompted imitation, as we did above.

9. As she gets better and better imitating sounds or words from your list, *add a few new ones*, but *practice earlier ones each session and during the day*.Imitations of *new* models get the *biggest reinforcement.* Good imitations of the earlier models still get *plenty of praise and, once in a while, a bite of food.* In other words, when the child is fairly good at imitating simple sounds or words, you do not have toreward *every* good imitation with food. But give as much *praise* and *hugging* as you can. Keep practicing a few of the old models each session.

**Other People and Places**

The more people the child imitates and the more places in which he imitates, the better. As soon as the child imitates a few of *your* sound or word models very well, have him imitate the *same* ones in new places. Also, have another person *join* you in sessions. When the child is used tothe other person being around, have that person work with the child on easy models for a few minutes. If the child stops imitating, you start working with him again. Then *slowly* have the new person join your sessions again. You could have the new person at first sit there and tag-reinforce imitations. When your child is used to that, then the new person can start giving a few earlier models that the child imitates well; and the new person tags and reinforces.

When the child is working well with the new person, let that person begin teaching *new* sounds or words. Spread Verbal Imitation tonew people and places *slowly.* If the child becomes fussy, stops imitating, or cries, go back to a more comfortable one-to-one session for a few days. Make sure that the child is rewarded often in a new place and by a new person.

Section 6 is on *teaching basic sounds.* If your child does not say or imitate words yet, or if he needs help with *many* sounds, start working through Section 6. But if he says or imitates *many words,* and *only* needs help on some of the hard sounds, you can start working on Section 7 (syllables) or Section 8 (words). Remember to *come back to Sections 6 and 7 to find out how to teach harder sounds and syllables*.

**6. TEACHING BASIC SOUNDS (VI7)**

**What Kinds of Sounds Are There?**

There are about forty sounds in the English language. Some are called *consonants,* others are called *vowels.* Let’s talk about consonants first.

CONSONANT SOUNDS

Consonant sounds are made with the *lips, tongue,* and *teeth.* When you read the list of consonants below, **study** how you move your lips, tongue, and teeth to make the sounds. Remember, consonants are *sounds, not letters* in the alphabet.   
 Note. Two kinds of consonants are *continuous sounds* and or *stop* sounds. You can say continuous sounds (sounds, not letters!) all day.

*Mmmmmmmm  
Fffffff*

*Rrrrrrr.*

However, stop sounds are “quick and quiet.” You can’t drag out the *K* in cat, the *D* in dog, the *T* in top and cat. So,

1. **We say stop sounds with a little puff of air**. Try it. Say pet the usual way. My pet is pretty puffy. Just a little pop.   
2. Also, **not *PUh****….* Just a little pop of air. Don’t let your child for very long say *KUh*, *BUh*, *DUh*, *TUh*, *GUh*, or *JUh.* “Listen again. Look at my mouth. (Point) Quick and quiet. *T… T…T…* NOT *TUhhhhhh…T…T…*”(Model)

“Now, say *T…T…*with me. (Lead) Quick and quiet…. Look at my mouth. Get ready…(Finger over your lips and over child’s lips to prepare for a small puff. Now let go and give the model…*T…T…T.*)  
 Let’s say the child is close. No obvious *TUhhh.* So, tag-treat---“YES. *T.* Quick and quiet.”

Repeat a few more times. Big treats as the child’s imitation gets closer to the model.

“Now, you’ll say *T…T…T…*all by yourself. (Test/check) Quick and quiet… (Prompt with your finger---or the child’s finger if she’s agreeable---over the child’s lips.) Get ready…” (Signal. Take finger off of child’s lips.)  
 If the child is close, Tag-treat-“YES. *T.* Quick and quiet.”

Repeat a few more times. Big treats as the child is closer. Review and shape closer tries later.

As said, you can prepare your child to say stop sounds quick and quiet when (a few weeks earlier) you started working on breathing, blowing, and jaw, lip, and tongue movements.

Some consonants are continuous (*Mmmm*) and some are stop sounds (*P*, *D*, *K*, *J*, *Q*, *X*, *T*, *J*, *G*). Also, some consonants are *voiced* (*M*, *B*, *D*, *G*, *V*, *N*, *L*, *R*, *J*, *Z*) and some are *unvoiced* (*K*, *T*, *S*, *F*, *P,* and others). Notice that your mouth does the same thing for *F* and *V, B* and *P.* The difference is that *B* and *V* use your voice. You feel it in your nose and throat. While *F* and *V* are *unvoiced.* Nothing happening in your throat. So,   
 **We use slightly different methods to teach voiced and unvoiced, continuous and stop-sound consonants.**

Examples of consonants are:

*H* (*H*elp, a*H*ead) *K (Key,* nic*K*le, as*K*)

*P* (*P*ill, sto*PP*ing, dro*P*) G (*G*ood, ci*G*ar, ba*G*)

*B (B*oo*,* ro*BB*er, mo*B*) *NG* (si*NG*er, ha*NG*)

*M* (*M*e, ha*MM*er, cla*M*) *Y* (*Y*es, be*Y*ond)  
*WH* (*WH*at) *L* (*L*ip, mi*L*k, ba*LL*)   
*W* (*W*e, s*W*im) *R* (*R*un, a*RR*ow, ca*R*)  
 *F* (*F*un, a*F*ter, i*F*) *S* (*S*ee, me*SS*y, bu*S*)

*V* (*V*an, ne*V*er, li*V*e) *Z* (*Z*oo, fu*ZZ*y, fi*ZZ*)

*TH* (*TH*ree, bir*TH*) *SH (SHe,* bu*SH*el, di*SH*)

*T (Two,* but*TT*er, ba*T*) *ZH* (as in measure)

*D* (*D*og, mu*DD*y, woo*D*) *CH* (*CH*air, tea*CH*)

*N (N*o*,* mo*N*ey, ma*N*) *J* (*J*ump, and as in fudge)

Again, **these are sounds, not letters**. Say each sound by itself. How do you make the sound?

**How to Prompt Basic Sounds**

Now let’s see how to prompt sounds. *Don’t panic* because there are so many. You’ll only teach a few at a time. Practice prompting yourself in front of a mirror. There are several ways to prompt each sound. If one does not work well, try another. However…

*“What if my child doesn’t like me to physically prompt her mouth?”*

Some children do not like having their mouths or tummies touched.

THIS IS A CASE FOR TAG TEACH!

Here is a list of touchings that may be uncomfortable for some children. Maybe the list is different for your child. YOU know best!

1. Gently push in on her tummy.   
 a. Gentle touch.  
 b. Tiny push.  
 c. More of a push to help her breath come out.   
2. Your hand is closer and closer to the child’s mouth.  
3. Touch her chin.

4. Touch her lips.

5. Touch her/your throat---so the child feels the voice.

6. Gently lift her chin to close her mouth.

7. Gently pull her chin her down to open her mouth.

8. Close her lips.

9. Open her lips.

10. Touch her tongue.

11. Gently push her tongue in or up (to her teeth or to the roof of her mouth).

12. The above with a tummy push.

We can help a child accept being touched, by tag-reinforcing when she is calm as we slowly go through the above (or your) list with her. How?

*Begin using Tag Teach at your child’s point of success*. Let’s say she is okay when you lightly touch her cheeks, but no more than that. So,

1. Say what you are going to do—the first tag point. “Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek.” For one second! Tag-reinforce (treat, praise, hug)-verify. “Yes, Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek.”  
2. Repeat a few times to firm up the child being calm while you touch her cheek for one second---child accepts the touch.  
3. Slowly increase how long you touch her cheek up to a few seconds. You could say, “Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek mooorree.” For two seconds! Tag-reinforce (treat, praise, hug)-verify. “Yes, Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek MORE.”  
4. Then move down your list. For example, you might move your hand CLOSER to your child’s mouth. “Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek.” Tag-reinforce (treat, praise, hug)-verify. “Yes, Mommy touch Pearl’s cheek.” Start with a one-second touch, and then a few seconds, as in 1-3, above.  
5. Maybe now the tag point is gently touch lips at the corner. “Mommy touch Pearl’s mouth.” Tag-reinforce (treat, praise, hug)-verify. “Yes, Mommy touch Pearl’s mouth.”  
6. Repeat a few times to firm it up---child accepts the new touch place.  
7. If the child resists (turns away?) stop! Back up to a touch with which she is comfortable; for example, touching her cheek. Tag-treat-verify as your fingers get closer to her mouth.

Repeat so that the child gets more and more used to being touched. Quit a session when the child is calm (successful). You can always back up if the child becomes uncomfortable. Take a break and try again later.

Now let’s see how *to prompt* sounds to help children to imitate.

Before you read on,

PROMPT YOURSELF TO MAKE THE SOUNDS. HOW DO **YOU** DO IT? Add your methods to mine.

CONSONANT SOUNDS

***H* (*H*e, a*H*ead).** Continuous, unvoiced.

1. One way to prompt the *H* sound is to have the child *breathe out* with his mouth *wide open.* Have him see and feel air coming out by holding a strip of tissue paper in front of his mouth or having him feel the breath on the back of his hand.

2. You can also prompt the *H* sound by having him imitate *Ha-Ha,*

*Ho-Ho, He-He.* GENTLY, use a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick to hold his tongue *flat* in his mouth. Reinforce for letting you do this.

3. Drag out the *Hhhhhhh* so your child hears and sees the model, and joins in.

***P* *(P*ie, sto*PP*ing, dro*P*)*.***Stop sound, unvoiced.  
1. Make sure the child *sees how* you move your lips for the *P* sound.

2. Have him watch when you GENTLY and quietly puff the *P* sound on his hand or a strip of tissue paper.

3. “Pluck” his upper lip with your finger or a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick to say a *P-P-P-P* sound.

4. Or have him make the *H* sound. Then *quickly* close his lips and *pop*

them open again.

5. Or push his lower lip up against his upper lip with your thumb and forefinger. Then quickly bring his lower lip back down to make a puff of air come out.

6. To make sure your child says a sharp *P* (because you **can’t** drag it out; it’s a stop sound), when you give the model, say “Listen. Quick and quiet. *P…* Quick and quiet… *P…..*”

***B* *(B*oy, ro*BB*er, mo*B*).** Stop sound, voiced.  
1. Show the difference between the *P* and *B* sounds by going *P… B…P….B slowly.* Then do the following:

2. *Flap* his lips gently to say the *B-B-B* sound.  
3. Close his lips lightly with your thumb and forefinger. Then open his lips fast.

4. Or have him babble *B-B-B* at the same time that you flap his lips up and down. “Now YOU do it!” (Physical prompt if needed.)

***M*** **(*M*e, ha*MM*er, cla*M*).** Continuous sound, voiced.  
1. Show the child how you close your lips to say *Mmmm.*  
2. Put your thumb and forefinger *under* his lower lip, and gently push his lips together. While holding his lips, say *Mmmmmmm* and let him feel the sound coming out of your nose.

***WH* (*Wh*at).** Continuous sound, unvoiced.  
1. Have the child watch you blow onto a strip of tissue paper while you say *WH-WH-WH.*

2. Put your thumb and forefinger at the *corners* of his mouth and push his lips into a *round* position. With your other hand push *in* and *up* on his tummy to make the air come out. Reward for letting you do this.

***W* (*W*e, s*W*im).** Continuous, voiced.  
1. Try to get the child to imitate *Ah -WAh* or *U -Ee.* This way he will slide the *W* sound right in.

***F* (*F*ood, a*F*ter, i*F*, enou*F*/enough).** Continuous, unvoiced.  
1. Have the child watch when you “bite” your lower lip with your upper teeth for the *F* sound.

2. Push his lip in place with your finger, or have him push his own lip into position.

3. Or tell him to “bite” his lower lip. Then prompt him to blow out by pushing *in* on his tummy.

***V* (*V*an, ne*V*er, li*V*e).** Continuous, voiced. The *F* and *V* sounds are almost the same. In the *V* sound the child puts his lips just as for the *F,* but he uses his *voice.* Have your child feel your throat and then his own throat when you say *Vvvvv.* “It’s buzzzzzzing.”   
1. Practice the voice part by hummmmming with your child. Feel your throats before you teach *Vvvv.*

*2.* Have him put his lips and teeth in the *F* position and put your finger under his lower lip. Then flap his lip gently to say *V-V-V-V* sound.

3. Show the difference between *F* and *V* by saying *Ffff….Vvvv….Ffff…Vvvv.* Notice how we drag out the sounds so that the child can follow along.

***TH* *(THin,* bir*TH*)*.***Continuous, unvoiced.  
1. Show how you put your tongue on your upper teeth to say the *TH* sound.

2. Use a tongue depressor, your finger, or a frozen pop stick to gently push his tongue up and out until it is on the upper teeth. When his mouth is in this position, say *TH* (drag it out!) and prompt him to push the air out.

***T* (*T*op, but*TT*er, ba*T*).** Stop sound, unvoiced.

1. Show how you put the tip of your tongue on the *ridge* just behind your upper teeth to say the *T* sound. The sound of a ticking clock may help.

2. Use a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick to put the tip of his tongue in the right place behind his upper teeth. Do this *quickly* and let it go quickly to say the *T* sound.

3. Sometimes, tapping his upper teeth or tapping just above his upper lip will prompt the *T* sound. Then have him make sounds like *T-T-T-T-T. NOT TUh-TUh-TUh.* The *T* sound is quick and quiet. Say top and tool. Notice that you said only a quick *T.* There was no *Uhhh.*

***D* (*D*a*D,* mu*DD*y, woo*D*).** Stop sound, voiced. The *D* sound is made about the same way as *T*. We say *T* by touching the tongue *quickly* against the roof of the mouth, while we say *D* with a *slow* movement. Also, *D* has *voice*. Go back and forth between saying dad and tat. Feel the voice in dad? Feel how fast your tongue moves to say *T?*1. *Prompt* *D* just like *T*, but keep the tongue in place a little longer with a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick.   
2. Also have the child feel your throat and her throat when you say *D* versus *T.*3. Practice humming before you teach *D.* Let the child hear the difference by saying *T…D…T…D…T…D* or *T…T…T…D…D…D…*slowly.

***N* (*N*o, mo*N*ey, ma*N*).** Continuous sound, voiced  
1. Open your mouth wide, and have the child watch you put your tongue up and behind your upper teeth.

2. You can also have him put his finger next to your nose or throat to feel the little noise (the buzz) *Nnnnn* makes.

3. Use a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick to push his tongue up behind his upper teeth. Put your other hand on his chin. Then say *Nnnn…Nnnn…Nnnn… Nnnn*, and at the same time move his jaw and tongue up and down. Do not let his lips come together. If they do, that makes the *Mmmm* sound.

***K* (*K*ey, nic*K*le, as*K*).** Stop sound, unvoiced.

1. Play a coughing game with the child to get him to say *K…K…K…* Let him see how far back your tongue goes for the *K* sound.

2. Put a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick on the tip of his tongue, and push his tongue so that the *back* of it moves *back* and *up* and touches the top of his throat. Then prompt him to *whisper K.*

3. Or put your thumb *under* his throat and push *up* quickly while you whisper *K.* Teach him to prompt himself in the same way.

***G* (*Go,* ci*G*ar, ba*G*).** Stop sound, voiced.  
1. The *G* sound is close to the *K* sound. Prompt it in the same way with a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick, or by pushing up under the child’s throat.

2. *Hold* your thumb up under his throat while you say *G. Let go* as soon as he starts the *G* sound. This will make it come out as *G.* Prompt him to say *G…G…G.*

3. Show her the difference between *G* and *K* by saying and showing your mouth moving with *G…K…G…K…* or *G…G…G…G…K…K…K…K* slowly.

***NG* (si*NG,* ha*NGer*).** Stop sound, voiced.

1. This may be a hard sound. Let the child watch you say *NG…NG…NG…*

2. Prompt it with a tongue depressor or frozen pop stick, just like the *K* sound, by pushing the tip of his tongue so that the *back* of it goes way back. When his tongue is in position, say *NG* while you move his tongue *back and forth quickly* by pushing on the tongue depressor.

***Y* (*Y*es, be*Y*ond).** Continuous sound, voiced.

1. The easiest way to teach the *Y* sound is to have the child say *Ah-Yah* or *Eeee--YU* over and over. In this way, he will slide right into the *Y* sound.  
2. A frozen pop stick or tongue depressor may be used to push his tongue down a little flatter in his mouth while you have him imitate the model *YAh or Ee-U.*  
3. Or have him make the *Ee* sound and *pull his jaw down* while he is saying *Eeeee.* This will make the *Ee-Ah* sound. As he begins to add the *Y*, fade out the manual prompt.

***L* (*L*ip, mi*L*k, ba*LL*)**. Continuous, voiced.

1. Give the child practice lifting his tongue up to the right place. Have him watch you put the tip of your tongue on the ridge just behind your upper teeth. And have him watch and listen to you say *LAY…LAY…LEe…LEeee…LOhhh…*slowly.

2. Or say *Ah* and very slowly move your tongue to the *L* position while he is watching. This will make you say *Ah-LAh.*

3. Or use a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor to prompt him to put the tip of his tongue on the ridge behind his upper teeth. Then have him imitate *LAh-LAh-LAh.*

***R* (*R*un, a*RR*ow, ca*R*)** Continuous, voiced.

1. Have the child watch while you slowly move your mouth to the *R* position and make the *R* sound.

2. Put your thumb and forefinger across his lower jaw and hold the corners of his mouth in an *open* position. Do not let him purse his lips into the W position. Prompt him to imitate *Rrrrr* his mouth in the open position.

3. Or you can gently lift the tip of his tongue with a tongue depressor until it *almost* touches the roof of his mouth. Then prompt him to imitate the *R* sound and pull his jaw *down* a little at the same time.

***S* (*S*ee, me*SS*y, bu*S*)** Continuous, unvoiced.

1. Have the child stick his tongue out in the *TH* position. When his tongue is in this position, quickly push it in with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor. This will make the *S* sound.

2. Or have him open his mouth and put the tip of his tongue on the roof of his mouth. Then use a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor to move the tongue back *along* the roof of the mouth. Have him make a hiss or *SSSSS* sound.

3. Sometimes you can help a child tomake this sound by gently pressing his cheeks against his teeth.

4. Imitate a snake and have the child join in.

***Z* (*Z*oo, fu*ZZ*y, fi*ZZ*).** Continuous, voiced. The *Z* sound is made in almost the same way as the *S* sound, but the *Z* sound has some *voice* in it.

1. Prompt it the same way as the *S* sound, but press the child’s cheek harder against his teeth.

2. Or have him make a *V* sound (with his lower teeth on his upper lip), and then prompt him to move to the *Z* position by pushing his lower lip down and away from his upper teeth.

3. Have him imitate BZZZ-BZZZ.

***SH (SHe,* bu*SH*el, di*SH*).** Continuous, unvoiced.

1. Prompt the *SH* sound by putting your thumb and forefinger on the child’s cheek. Then squeeze his lips to an *almost round* position. At the same time, use a tongue depressor or a frozen pop stick to push his tongue *up* and *back* near the roof of his mouth.

**ZH (mea*ZH*ure).** Continuous, voiced.

1. Prompt this sound in the same way as for the *SH* sound, but press harder on the child's cheek.   
2. Let him hear and see the difference by saying *SH…ZH…SH…ZH.*3. Model it, and then tell him “Your turn to make an airplane! *ZHZHZHZH.*”

***CH* (*CH*air, tea*CH*).** Stop sound, unvoiced.

1. Have the child start to say the *SH* sound by squeezing in on his cheeks and pushing his tongue *up* and *back* a little with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor. When the *SH* sound starts tocome, *quickly* pull down his jaw. This will make the *CH* sound. Do this while you say the *CH* sound to him.

***J* (*J*ump, and as in fudge).** Stop sound, voiced.  
1. Prompt this sound in the same way as the *SH, CH,* and *ZH* sounds by squeezing the child’s cheeks rather hard against his teeth and by pushing his tongue *up* and *back* with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor. When he starts to make the *ZH* sound, *slowly* pull his jaw down.

Remember to practice these prompts on yourself first.

VOWEL SOUNDS

You may need to help your child to say vowel sounds. Vowels are made without the teeth or lips very much. The main difference between the vowel sounds is how much the mouth is open and how the tongue is moved. All the vowels are continuous sounds and are voiced. Try them out.

Examples of vowel sounds are:

*Ee (sEe*, *EeZEe/easy) Oo* (b*Oo*k)

*Ih* (f*Ih*t, *Ihn/*in) *Oh* (n*Oh*te)

*Ay* (d*Ay*, *AY*m/aim) *Aw (sAw)*

*E* (m*E*t*, E*lbow) *Ah* (f*Ah*ther, *Ah*lmond )

*A* (c*A*t) *Uh* (s*Uh*n/son/sun, *Uh*p)

*U* (t*U*ne, m*U*n/moon) *Iy* (b*Iy*t/bite, *Iy*m/I’m)

Here are ways to prompt vowel sounds. Practice on yourself in front of a mirror.

***Ee (sEe*, *EeZEe/easy***/  
1. Show the child the position for the *Ee* sound, with your mouth open a little and your lips *wide* at the corners.

2. Use your thumb and forefinger to spread his lips *wide,* and press the corners of his mouth *in* against his *upper* teeth. Say the model for the *Ee* sound.

3. It may help to flatten his tongue with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor at the same time.

***Ih* (f*Ih*t/fit, *Ihn/*in)**.

1. Show the child the position for the *Ih* sound.

2. Open his mouth a little more than for the *Ee* sound, and pull his lips apart slightly at the corners. Say the model for the *Ih* sound while you push *down* on the *tip* of his tongue or his lower lip with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor.

***Ay* (d*Ay*, *Ay*m/aim)**.  
1. Prompt the *Ay* sound by putting your thumb and forefinger on the child’s *lower* jaw just under the corners of his mouth.

2. Press against the lower jaw and bring it *down* a little. Then say the model for *Ay,* and at the same time quickly move the lower jaw *up.*

***E* (m*E*t*, E*lbow).**

1. One way to prompt the *E* sound is by moving the jaw *down* just a little. Say the model for *E* and then *press* with your forefinger under the lower lip, right in the *middle.*

2. Another way is to lower the jaw a little and push the front of the tongue down behind the lower front teeth while you say the *E* sound.

***A* (c*A*t, *A*fter)**   
1. One way to prompt the *A* sound is to lower the child’s jaw a little. Then put your thumb and forefinger under the lower lip near the middle. Then say the *A* sound, and flatten the lower lip against the lower front teeth and out toward the cheeks.

2. Another way is to keep your fingers in the same place and to push the tongue down behind the front teeth with a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor while you say the model for *A.*

***U* (t*U*ne, m*U*n/moon, bamb*U*/bamboo)**.

1. Show the child that his lips have to be *rounded and tight* for the *U* sound.

2. Put your thumb and forefinger at the corners of his mouth. Say the *U* sound, and quickly purse his lips by moving them to the *middle* so that there is a *small opening* for air.

***Oo* (b*Oo*k).**

1. Show the child see how the lips are *rounded* for the *Oo* sound.

2. Prompt this sound with both hands. Put the thumb and finger of one hand *over the upper lip* by the corners, and put the thumb and forefinger of the other hand *under the lower lip* at the corners. Then say the model for the *Oo* sound and *scoop* your fingers toward the *middle* all at once. When you are scooping your fingers together, *press* with the fingers holding the lower jaw.

***Oh* (n*Oht*e, bl*Oh/*blow)**

1. Show the child that he has to drop his lower jaw *a lot* for this sound.

2. Move his lower jaw down, Put the thumb and forefinger of one hand *over the upper lip* by the corners, and the thumb and forefinger of your other hand *under the lower lip* at the corners. Say the model for the *Oh* sound. Lift the jaw up at the same time that you *scoop* your fingers together. This is the same as for the *Oo* sound, but the jaw is lower.

***Aw (*s*Aw,* f*Aw*l/fall, p*Aw*s/pause).**1. Lower the child’s jaw. Put your thumb and forefinger at the corners of his mouth. Say the model for *Aw,* and push the corners of his mouth *outward* and *against* his jaw. It will help to also use the *edge* of a frozen pop stick or tongue depressor to *press* down the middle of the tongue.

***Ah* (f*Ah*ther, *Ah*lmond**/**almond)**

1. Prompt the *Ah* sound by lowering the child’s jaw about as much as for the *Aw* sound. Put your thumb and forefingers under his lower lip near the corners. Say the model for *Ah. Press inward* and pull the jaw down. At the same time, use your other hand to move the *upper lips outward.*

***Uh* (s*Uh*n/son/sun, *Uh*p/up).**

1. This sound is easy to prompt. All you have to do is gently hold the lower jaw near the chin. Present the model for *Uh,* and pull the jaw down a little.

***Iy* (b*Iy*t/bite, *Iy*m/I’m).**

1. Start by gently lowering the child’s jawwith your thumb and forefinger at the corners of his mouth. Say the model for *Iy,* and when he starts to imitate the sound, move his *jaw up* and *his lips out toward the corners.*

**Steps for Teaching Basic Sounds**

1. Start with sounds that:

a. He *already says.* Check your answer to item VI2 in Section 2, on evaluation, and the list of sounds you made during the week that we “eased” into Verbal Imitation—Section 4.

b. Are *easy* to see and say---like *M, Ah, P, T, B, F, U, Oh,* and *Ee.* c*.* He can *say in many words---*like eat, out, more.

2. Practice mouth movements and positions with the child before you model the sound. Use physical prompts (as we showed above) as needed. Wide open mouth for *Ah.* Closed lips for *Mm.*

3. Make sure the child is calm, quiet, and looking at your mouth. Show the mouth position and the sound it makes*.* **Point** to what your mouth is doing. Repeat.   
 “Look, mouth OPEN. *Ahhhhhhhh…* OOOpen*...Ahhhhhhh.*”   
 “Look, mouth CLOSED. *Mmmmmm…* ClOOOsed*…Mmmmmm.*”

4. If you think the child needs a prompt, use your hand or tongue depressor/ice pop stick to put her mouth in position.  
5. When the child’s mouth is in position, ***quickly*** *model the sound.* Like this.  
 a. Model the exaggerated mouth position and sound once or twice. Point to your closed lips for *Mmmm* or your open mouth for *Ahhhh.* “Watch my mouth (close lips). See? *Mmmmmm.*” Repeat.  
 b. Use the lead. “Say *Mmmmmm* (point to your lips) **with** me.”  
 **Stretch out** continuous sounds (*Sssss*, *Rrrrr*, *Ahhhh)* so the child gets time to see and hear them, and maybe join in. For stop consonants, (*D*, *P*, *T*, *K*, *G*) say, “Quick and quiet…..with me.”

Prompt as needed.  
 Repeat a few times until the child’s imitation is **better**.   
 Fade the prompt as the child imitates more independently (moves her own mouth) and is closer to the model.  
 c. Test/check. “Your turn to say…..*Mmmm* (point to your mouth).” Prompt as needed. For example, gently close the child’s lips. Repeat a few times. Go to another sound that is easy for the child. Come back to the earlier one later.  
 d. Tag-treat improvements. Say, “Good try. Let’s say *Mmmmm* again……Get ready.… *Mmmmm.*” Smile, hug for good tries.

6. Try having the child *look at himself in a mirror while you prompt his* *mouth into the correct position.* This may help *when you start on a new sound* and once in a while *for practice.*

7. You may have to repeat the above steps many times before the child *feels and hears what to do, and imitates correctly*. We are going for closer and closer imitations---*shaping*. So,

At first, tag-reinforce-verify **any****vowel sound** he makes after you say a**vowel model**, and **any consonant sound** he makes after you say a **consonant model**.

In other words, *at first the tag point is any CLOSE speech sound*! For example, let’s say that

a. You just started on the *Uh* sound. The first time you say the model (“Say *Uhhhh* .”) the child says *Ahhhh*. **Tag**-**treat**! If the child will understand, you might add, “You said *Ahhh.* The sound is ***Uhhhh****.*”   
 b. Immediately, try again. Put his mouth in position for *Uhhh*; say the model; and reinforce a vowel sound that is *a little closer* to *Uhhhhh.*

c. Later, *shape* (reinforce)closer imitations. For example, after a few days, *do not* reinforce saying *Ah* when you give the model for *Uh.* Instead, only *tag-reinforce* ***closer*** *imitations.*

When the child imitates the first sound well, begin teaching a second *sound*. Make sure *that the second sound is very different from the* first so the child sees and hears differences. For example, if the first sound is *Ah,* the second might be *F* or *M,* but not *Ee* or *Oh.*

8. Work on the second sound about five times, and then go *back to the first* for a little while. In other words, *switch among sounds*.   
9. Later, add a third sound that is very different from the other two.

10. If the child makes errors, stop after three tries and work on a different sound. Firm up mouth movements and positions of tough sounds and try again. Don’t push it!

10. It may take a few days or even a week before the child imitates the first sound correctly and on his own most of the time. Then we use *praise* (often) and *food* (once in a while) to reinforce correct imitations.  
11. Don’t work on imitation over and over in a row. The child will get tired, bored, or irritated. Switch activities. Quit while the child is engaged and successful. Then do an enjoyable activity.

Once he learns his first two or three sounds, he will learn the others faster.

12. If the child makes the same error imitating a sound, back up to an easier element---mouth movements and positions IN the sound. Here’s an example.

Ma Ironton is working with Pearl. The sound model is *Ffff.* Pearl says *SH*, *P*, *PUh.* Notice how you make the *F* sound. See the prompt for *F*,above. So,  
 a. Mom backs up from imitating the *F* sound, and works on the mouth position *element* for *F*. She teaches Pearl to *put her lower lip against her upper teeth*---*the position for F.*   
 b. The first try. Mom tells the tag point. “Lip on (points to) TEETH.” She shows the visual model and uses a physical prompt that *puts* Pearl’s lower lip against her upper teeth. Ooops. Pearl did **not** **keep** her lower lip **on**her upper teeth, but she looked at the model and allowed the prompt. So, Mom gives a little reinforcement: Smile and, “Good try!”   
 c. Next try. Mom says, “Lip on (points to) teeth.” She shows the visual model AND uses a physical prompt that gently HOLDS Pearl’s lower lip against her upper teeth. Then Mom **almost** lets go. **Pearl holds her tongue in position for one second!** This meets the TAG point. So, Mom TAG-treats-verifies. “Yes! Lip OOONNN teeth*.*”d. A few more tries. Mom works to get Pearl to hold the *F* position (lower lip on upper teeth) for a *little longer*. She *fades* the prompt (holding Pearl’s lip against her upper teeth less and less) so that Pearl holds the *F* position by herself. “Good try…. Hold lip ON teeth MORE.” TAG-treat- verify when she does.   
 e. *Now that Pearl does the mouth position for F, Mom puts Pearl’s mouth in position for F, and ADDS the model F sound.*  
 Mom does this four times. Each time,   
 (1) Mom first helps Pearl put her lower lip on her upper teeth.   
 (2) Then Mom models *Ffff* (“Say, *Ffffffff.*”)and gently pushes on Pearl’s tummy (or says “Blow,” which they already worked on) to help Pearl *push air through her lips and teeth while in the Ffff position.* Each time, Mom praises and says, “Yes, *Ffffffff.*”  
 (3) Finally, with her lower lip in position, Pearl pushes a little air out and makes a tiny *F* sound. TAG-treat. “Yes, *Fffff.*”  
 (4) Mom repeats this a few more times, and TAG-treat-verifies each time Pearl makes a small *F* sound.  
 f. In next sessions, Mom raises the tag point and only tag-treats when Pearl’s *F* sound is stronger.

**Please practice what we just did.**  
  
13. Sometimes, instead of imitating the model, the child “runs through” all the sounds she can say until she hits the right one. For example, the model is *Ee* and she says, *Ah* ... *Uh* ... *Uuu* ... *Uuu*.. *Ee.* If you reinforce when she finally says the right sound, *it will teach her to say a string of errors.* She will not learn to listen and then repeat what she hears.

So, do not reinforce when she finally says the right sound after a string of wrong sounds. Instead, *turn your head* the other way a little or *look down* at the table for about 5 seconds while she is saying a string of sounds. And, most important, the next time you say the model, *prompt before* she has a chance to say the wrong sound.

14. If the child keeps having trouble with a sound, (a) try a different way of prompting it; (b) practice imitating the mouth position for it, or (c) imitate the way *she* is saying it and then model the right way. For example, “Pretty close. You said *P*, *P*, *P…*Now say *B*, *B*, *B* ..*.*”Then prompt the right sound.   
 Do the same thing when a child adds *Uh* to a sound. The sound is *Mmmm.* But the child says *MUhhhh.* Or the sound is *P*, and the child says *PUhhhh.* Correct like this.   
 “Listen…..*Mmmmmmm*. Listen again…. *Mmmmmm.*”(model)“Say *Mmmmm* with me… Get ready.” Put your finger over her lips or gently close her lips together, so that she says *Mmmmm*, not *MmmmUhhh.* (lead) **Reinforce** when *Mmmmm* comes out. “Yes, you said *Mmmmm.*”  
 Repeat the lead a few times…. Then “Your turn. Say *Mmmmmm* all by yourself*.*”(test/check)Tag-treat. “Yes, *Mmmmm.*”   
 Repeat a few times to firm up *Mmmmm* without the *Uhhh*.  
 Back up to using the lead again (as above) if the child starts adding *Uh.*”

Or, instead of just modeling *Mmmmm* (as above), you could show the difference. “Listen, watch my mouth. You said *MUhhh.* The sound is *Mmmm…* (Press your lips together--prompt yourself.)*.* NOT *MmmmUhhhhhhh…. Mmmmmmm.* Now let’s say *Mmmmm* with me. Get ready….” You might use a physical prompt.

15. Continue helping the child to be calm when you touch her face. For instance, stroke her face when you reward her, and prompt her on sounds she can already imitate pretty well.

16. If the child wiggles and waves his arms while you are showing the model, he is not likely to imitate it well. So, calm him down first, either by *waiting* until he is quiet or by *gently* putting his hands at his sides or on the table. Praise for sitting quietly and present the model.

17. As the child gets better at imitating basic sounds, start having other people work with him (a little at a time) and work in new places.

**Keeping Track of (Measuring) the Child’s Progress on Basic Sounds**

There are two ways to keep track of the child’s progress:

1. Day by day with a note pad.

2. Week by week with the Speech Table (Table 1) at the end of this chapter.

List on a note pad the sounds you are working on during a session. Each sound is a *row* on the page. *Each* time you say a sound model, either you or a second person should write in the row for that sound how the child imitated. When the child imitates a sound model correctly and without a prompt, write “C” (for correct). When he imitates correctly *with* a prompt, write “P” (for prompted). And when he is way off or does not imitate at all, write “I” (for incorrect). Here is what the page for one session might look like.

*Table Session 5*  
 *B:* P P C C I I I I P P P

*Ee:* I I I P P P P C P P P

*F:* I I I P P P P I I I P

*M:* C C C C C I P P C C C

*Ah:* C C C C C C C C I C C

This shows that the child “learned” to imitate the *Ah* sound, because he is doing it correctly and without a prompt about 90 percent of the time. So, from now on, we give practice on the *Ah* sound each session to keep it strong. You can see that the child needs more on the *B, Ee,* and *F* sounds.

Keep track of the child’s progress week by week with the Speech Table at the end of this chapter. Use one column for each week. Write sounds you are working on in the column for that week, even if you worked on them in past weeks. Write in the column called “Basic Sounds, Words, Phrases, and Sentences to Work On” any sounds the child is having trouble with; for example, the *B, Ee,* and *F* sounds in the above example.

*When the child finally imitates a sound correctly and without* *a prompt about 90 percent of the time, underline it in the column for that week.* For instance, the *Ah* sound would be underlined on the Speech Table for the child in the above example. As you look over the weeks on the child’s Speech Table, *count the number of underlined sounds (sounds he has learned to imitate) and chart them.* The sample Speech Table below shows how.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*B B B* (for practice *B* (for practice)  *Ah Ah* (for practice) *Ah* (for practice) *Ah* (for practice) *F F F F* ( for practice)

*Uh* *Uh*

The first week the child learned to imitate *Ah*; the second week, *B*; the third week, *F*; and the fourth week, *Uh*. He learned one new sound a week; that is what we would chart. Put a *circle around a sound that the child is beginning to USE to communicate*; for example, Pearl says *Uh* to get Mom to pick her up.

Figures 3 and 4 show the progress of Steven Rogers and Nancy Brown imitating basic sounds, words, phrases, and sentences. Their parents ran sessions on Verbal Imitation each day, using food (at first), praise, and activities as rewards. The rest of the day the children had to *use* the sounds they now imitated to get things they wanted.

Both families had taught Learning Readiness, Looking, Listening, and Moving, and Motor Imitation skills for several months before they started Verbal Imitation. The dots for the baseline show how many sounds, words, phrases, and sentences the children said at the time their Verbal Imitation programs started. Follow the line for Sounds on each chart and see that there was steady progress, with children learning about two new sounds each week.  
 At the end of six weeks Steven was imitating13 new sounds, and at the end of nine weeks Nancy was imitating 12 new sounds. This may not seem like much, but keep in mind that before their programs started these children did not talk much at all. Steven could *say* many sounds, but he did not *repeat* them after someone else (imitate). And Nancy said only about nine sounds on her own. Also, the parents did not spend much time teaching the children to imitate new sounds. Why? Because once the children imitated a few sounds, the parents spent most of the time teaching imitation of *syllables, words, phrases,* and *sentences*,and to *use* words, phrases, and sentences around the house. Look at the line for Words, and see that the children were learning to hook up sounds into many words.

So, the message is this.

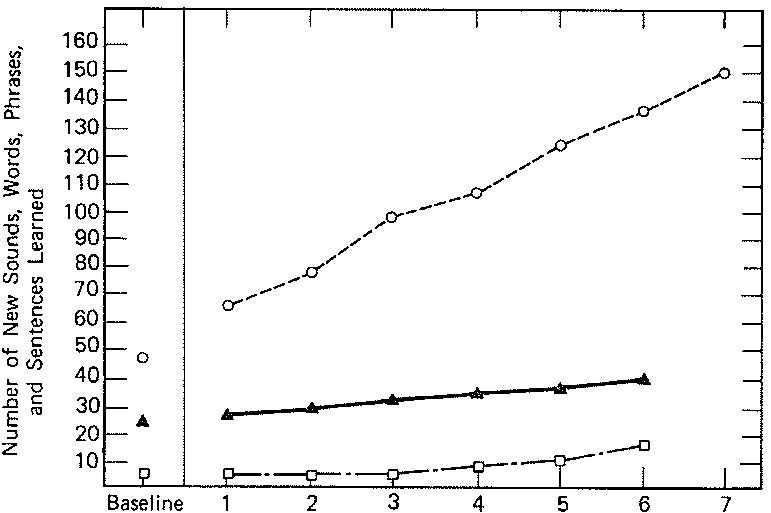
As a child learns to imitate sounds, practice them each session.   
 Have him imitate or say the sounds as a way to communicate what he wants.

For instance, when he imitates *Ow,* have him say *Ow* before he goes outside; have him imitate or say *Ee* before he eats; and have him say *Uh* before you pick him up. “You want me to pick up UP? Ask me. Say *UhhhP.*”

At first, tag-reinforce-verify *anything* she says when you tell her toask. Later, as she gets better at imitating sounds during sessions, tag-reinforce only when she comes *closer* to saying the *word.* When she learns to *use* a sound in a *functional* way (to ask for or name things without a prompt), *circle it* in the column for that week. Notice that *Ah* and *Uh* are circled on the sample Speech Table above.  
 As soon as the child imitates about five *consonant* sounds and about three *vowel* sounds, think about teaching him to link sounds into *syllables* (like *MAh, BEe, LU, Uh, WAw*)and short *words* (like baby, mama, me, eat, food, go). If the child does notsay *words* yet or has trouble saying *many sounds,* you should start

working on Section 7 (*syllables*)*.* If the child says *many words,* go to Section 8 (*words*)*.* But no matter what section you go to next, get her *to use sounds, syllables, words,* *phrases, and sentences functionally as soon as you can,* even if she does not say them perfectly.

Note: If you spend too much time having the child just imitate syllables, it will be harder for her toput words together into phrases and sentences. So, *as soon as she imitates syllables that are close to words* (like *IyS/*iceor *WAw), have her use these syllables to name and ask for things* (ice cream, water). And, *as soon as she says* a few words (eat, wanna, I), *teach her to hook up these words and use them in phrases* (Go out, Big ball) and *sentences* (I wanna cookie).



Weeks

Figure 3. Number of new sounds, words, phrases, and sentences Steven Rogers learned by imitation in a home program. Each day, Steven’s parents ran sessions on Verbal Imitation, using praise and, at first, food as rewards. The rest of the day they used natural Activity Rewards to reward good imitations. The dots for the baseline week show how many sounds, words, and phrases Steven said by the time the Verbal Imitation program started. Each week after that, the number of new ones he learned to imitate was added on.   
 Sounds Words Phrases

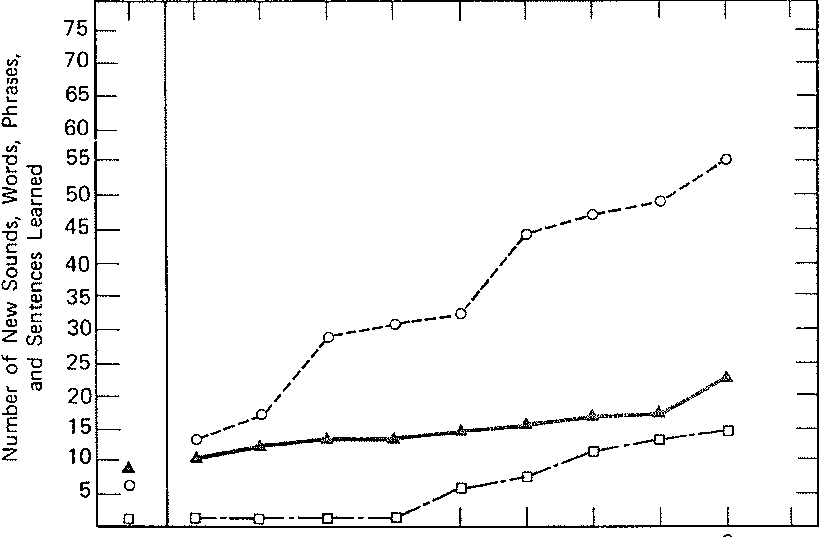
Baseline 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   
 Weeks

Figure 4. Number of new sounds, words, phrases, and sentences Nancy Brown learned by imitation in a home program. Each day, Nancy’s parents ran sessions on Verbal Imitation, using praise and, at first, food as rewards. The rest of the day they used natural Activity Rewards to reward good imitations. The dots for the baseline weeks show how many sounds, words, and phrases Nancy said by the time the Verbal Imitation program started. Each week after that, the number of new ones she learned to imitate was added on.   
 Sounds Words Phrases

**7. TEACHING THE CHILD TO IMITATE SYLLABLES (VI8)**

*Syllables* are *basic sounds* said in a short sequence. For example, the syllable *MAh* is made from *M* and *Ah.* A child may say some basic sounds, but *have a hard time saying the sounds together in syllables or* *words.* For example, he says *B, L,* and *U*,but not together in *BLU* (blue). Why? Because *the way you say each sound in a syllable has to do with the sounds next to it.* The *L* in *LU* is not made the same way as the *L* in *BLU* (blue) or the *L* in *BAwl* (ball or bawl).

Say these three syllables slowly: *LU, BLU,* and *BAwL.* When you say *LU*,you *start* with your tongue in the *L* position. But when you say *L* in *BLU* (blue), your mouth starts in the *B* position and then moves fast into the *L* position. And when you say *L* in *BAwL,* your tongue is pushed down for the *Aw* sound and then moves up to the *L* position.

So, now let’s give a child practice saying sounds in *different places* in syllables. A good way is imitating *nonsense syllables.*

**What Are Nonsense Syllables?**

*Nonsense syllables do not have meaning.* They are not really words themselves, but are PART of many words. Examples are *LAh, BU, Ah-BAh, GAh-GAh, KAh­ KAh.* There are three kinds of nonsense syllables. One kind *has a consonant first,* like *BU, LU, MEe.* Another has a *consonant at the end,* like *OhK* (oak), *EF,* or *UhP.* And the last has a *consonant in the middle,* like *Ah-BAh, KAh-KAh,* or *U-LU.* Practice the three kinds of nonsense syllables so that the child learns to say syllables and words with the same consonant sounds in the first, middle, and end positions.

How to Work on Nonsense Syllables

Teach the child to imitate nonsense syllables the same way you taught imitating basic sounds—in section 6.

1. Warm up with enjoyable tasks, and practice separate sounds first. Then,

2. Wait until she is looking at your mouth and *slowly* and *clearly* say the nonsense syllable model.

3. If she comes pretty close to imitating the model, tag-reinforce-verify.

4. If she does not try to imitate the model, or if she does not come close, wait a few seconds…. Then prompt the next time by moving her mouth into the right position. Tag-reinforce-verify improved imitations.

5. *After* you have prompted several times, start to *fade out* your prompts until you hardly have to touch her mouth at all.

6. Work on the same model only a few times in a row.

7. You can go back and forth between imitating basic sounds and syllables, and enjoyable tasks!

START WITH EASY NONSENSE SYLLABLES

The easiest nonsense syllables have a *consonant first,* like *BUh* or *LU.* Start with nonsense syllables whose basic sounds the child *already says* or *imitates.* For example, if he imitates *B, Ah, M,* and *Ee,* work on nonsense syllables like *BAh, MAh, BEe, BEe-BAh, MEe-MEe, BAh-BAh-BAh*, and *MAh-MEe.*

1. When the child is calm and looking at your mouth, say the model (1) slowly, (2) several times, and (3) exaggerate your mouth movements.  
 “Listen, *MmmmmmAhhhh….*Again, *MmmmmmAhhhh.*”2. Prompt him to close his lips in the *M* position.   
3. Then say the *model---Mmmmm---*and as soon as he starts to say *Mmmm,* gently *move his jaw down as* ***you*** *say* *the* *Ah* sound.   
4. Then tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes, *MmmmmAhhhh*!”  
5. Practice the same model three or four times, and then switch to another.

(Please read this paragraph again.)

After a while, the child may not need as much prompting. Let him try to imitate the model on his own, and *only prompt the sound he is having trouble with*. *Make up easy nonsense syllables using the basic sounds he says.* Practice them until he imitates several very well. Then go on to the next kind of nonsense syllable.

NONSENSE SYLLABLES WITH THE CONSONANT AT THE END

When the child imitates *several* nonsense syllables with a consonant *first,* teach her to imitate nonsense syllables with the *same sounds and the consonant at the end.* For example, if you have worked on *MAh, BAh, MEe,* and *BEe,* teach her *AhM, EeM, EeB,* and *AhB.*

If she needs help with the whole syllable, just put her mouth into the position for the first sound in the syllable---the vowel---before you present the model. Then present the model slowly. Exaggerate your mouth movements “Listen… *EeeeB….*Again.…. *EeeeB*.” As soon as she starts saying the first sound (*Eeee*), move her mouth into position for the next sound--the consonant---*B*.For example, if you are teaching her to imitate *EeB,* move her mouth into the *Ee* position and then say the model-*--EeeBBB.* As soon as she starts to say *Ee,* close her mouth into the *B* position. (Please read this paragraph again.)

When she imitates nonsense syllables that have a consonant *first* and at the *end,* start teaching nonsense syllables with the same consonant in the *middle.*

NONSENSE SYLLABLES WITH THE CONSONANT IN THE MIDDLE

*Start with consonant and vowel sounds he already says in the first and last positions in syllables---*vowel first, then a consonant, and then a vowel; for example, *Ah-BAh, U-LU,* or *Ee-ME.*

FPrompt by moving his mouth into position for the first sound (vowel--*Ah*) *before* you say the model. Then say the first sound. As he imitates the first, prompt his mouth for the second (consonant--*B*); and as he says the second, prompt his mouth for the last (vowel—*Ah*).

Let’s say you are teaching *Ah-Bah.* First prompt his mouth into the *Ah* position, and when he starts to say *Ah,* close his mouth into the *B* position. As he says the *B* sound, prompt his mouth open again into the *Ah* position and tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes, *Ah-Bah.*”

If he does not need help with all of the sounds in the syllable, prompt only the ones he has trouble with. For instance, in the syllable *Ah-BAh,* if he starts the syllable with the right vowel but has trouble with the consonant in the middle (B), wait until he says *Ah* and then quickly prompt the *B* sound.

**New Sounds and New Nonsense Syllables**

Practicing nonsense syllables helps a child imitate new *basic sounds.* Slowly add imitating new sounds to sessions. When she says and imitates a new sound, hook it up into new syllables with sounds she already imitates. Also, underline on the Speech Table new sounds she imitates.

**How Long to Work on Nonsense Syllables**

Do notspend too much time on nonsense syllables or it will be harder for the child to say and imitate *longer* words and phrases. *Give practice saying the same basic sounds in different positions in syllables---sometimes first, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes at the end.* Work on nonsense syllables until the child says and imitates a few of them, like *BAh-BAh-BAh, LU-LU, Ah-KAh,* and *MAh-MAh.* And, as soon as she says syllables that are pretty close to words (like *WAw* for water or *MOh* for more), prompt her to *use* these syllables to ask for things. Do not wait until she says a word perfectly. Have her use the syllable (part word) the way she says it now--- the point of success!

**8. IMITATING WORDS (VI9)**

This section tells how to teach a child to hook up sounds and syllables into words. Keep in mind that *imitating words is not as important as using words.* As soon as a child imitates a word well enough that you know what he is saying, have him *use it, even if he does not say it perfectly.* The more he uses the word to communicate and to get things that he wants, the more practice he will have and the faster he will learn new words. Little by little you can prompt him to say the words better and better and can raise the tag point for imitations to tag-reinforce-verify.

Also, as soon as he says two or three words, start teaching him to hook up those words into *phrases* and *sentences.* If you spend too much time on single words, it will be harder to teach him to imitate phrases and sentences. So, when the child says a few words (eat, food, go, out, wanna, I), teach him to hook them up into phrases and sentences (Go out, Eat food, Wanna eat, Wanna go out, I wanna eat). Do not worry that he is not saying phrases and sentences perfectly. What is important is that he *tries* to hook up words into phrases and simple sentences and *uses* them.

**Where Do I Work on Word Imitation?**

Work on word imitation during regular sessions at the table so the child gets plenty of practice. Also, prompt her to imitate and use words during the day at the right times and places. In other words, *Use Grandma’s Law as much as you can.* Prompt her to say or imitate *Out* before she goes outside; have her say *Eat* before you give her something from the refrigerator; have her imitate *water* before you give her a glass of water; and require *Ride* before you take her for a ride. It is all right if she does not say or imitate the words perfectly. She is learning to say something pretty close to the right word at the right times and places.

**What Words Do I Start With?**

Start with words that….

1. The child already says or is close to saying.

2. Are made of sounds and syllables that already says.

3. Are made of sounds that are easy to say and see, are easy to prompt, and are short.

Good words to start with might be baby, bee, big, boy, come, cookie, cup, eat, egg, eye, go, gum, hat, home, hot, key, kitty, man, mama, me, meat, moo, no, and walk. The best are those he can *use* in the home, school, and public places to ask for things, like words for eating (eat, egg, meat, more) and other activities he likes (go, come, out, up, see, walk).

Words that start with the consonants *M, B, P,* W, and the vowels *Ee, E, Ah* are the easiest. Words that start with consonants like *Y* (you), *R* (run), *L* (lip), *J* (jump), *SH* (shoe), *CH* (chew), and Z (zoo) are harder. Words that have *consonant blends*,like *BL* (blue), *GL* (glue), *FR* (Frank), *DR* (drink), *ST* (stay, must), *SHR* (shrub), and *NGL* (jungle), are also harder. Save the hard ones for later.

**How Do I Run Sessions?**

Before you start each session, make a *list* of words to work on. Also write these words in the column for that week on the Speech Table. *When the child learns to imitate a word correctly and without a prompt about 90 percent of the time, underline it in the column for that week.* Each week, you might *chart* the number of new words he has learned to imitate.

“How do I know if he is imitating a word correctly 90 percent of the time?” Just *count imitations* during sessions the same way you did with sounds. Use a page of your note pad each session, and have a row for each word you work on. Write a C next to the word when the child imitates it correctly and without a prompt; a P when he says it with a prompt; and an I when he does not say anything or is way off. A page for one session might look like this.

*Session 12*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
EAT: P P P P I I I P P C P C P C C C C P C C  
GO: P C C C C C C C C C C C P C C C C C  
MORE: P P P I I I I I P P P P P P C C P C  
UP: C C C C C C C P P C C C C C C C C C C

As you see, the child is imitating the words go and up correctly and without a prompt (C) about 90 percent of the time. So, these two words can be *underlined on his Speech Table*.

Most important, use Grandma’s Law as often as possible during the day to get the child to use these words in a functional way. For example, prompt her to say (or imitate) something close to Go before she is pushed on the swings, and something close to Up before she is picked up. *When the child starts using a word functionally, circle it in the column for that week on the speech table.*

Write the words she is having the most trouble with in the column called Basic Sounds, Words, Phrases, and Sentences to Work On, and work on them the most. Maybe the child needs help with the *basic sounds* or *syllables* in them.

When you first start, work on three or four words during a session of about 20 minutes. Work on each one for a few minutes, and then switch to another. The one you switch to should look and sound very different from the first. For example, switch from eat to mama, not from eat to eye.

Once he imitates a word pretty well, put it on the back burner. In other words, you do not have to work on it as much as the others. But give the child practice on it each session and use Grandma’s Law during the day. Then add a few new words.

*Give the biggest reinforcement when the child gets a little better at imitating*

*words he used to have the hardest time with.* Use a tag, strong *praise* and *food* (if you use it) when you start on a new word. As he gets better and better at a word, fade out food rewards slowly for that word and use *strong praise* and *Activity Rewards* instead.

This is what teaching might look like.

“Watch my mouth…. Listen….Say, mmmooorrrre.”  
 *MmmOhhhh.* Tag-treat-“Yes, mmmmoooRRR.” Child’s point of success for now, but we need to firm the *R* sound.

Listen, say rrrrr.” Firm the sound.  
 *Rrrrr.* Repeat a few times to firm up. Tag-treat-“Yes, rrrr.” Now put *R* back into the whole word.

“Listen, say mmmmoooRRRRe.”  
 *MmmOhhhUuu.* Uuuu is close to R. Try it…. So, Firm up Rrrr some more. Then try the whole word again.  
 “Listen, say mmmmoooRRRRe.”  
 If the child says *MmOhhhUuuu* again, switch to another SIMPLER word or to a word she already says. We want the child to have success! And later work on Rrrrr. Then come back to moRrrre.   
 However, if the child was closer to moRRre this time---*MmmOhUuuRr--* tag-treat-“Yes, moRRRe,” and practice a few more times to firm it. Then switch.

**Three Ways to Link Basic Sounds and Syllables into Words**

Here are three methods for teaching words. Start with the first. If that does not work in a few days, try the second. And if that does not help in a few days, try the third. *You can even go back and forth between the methods!* One of the methods, or some combination (!) will work. Again, we do not look for the big breakthrough. It may take a few weeks or more for a child to imitate the first few words. Why? Think of all the little skill elements the child has to put together. Watching, taking turns, distinguishing sounds (*Eeee* vs. *Ahhh* vs. *Uhhh*), moving her mouth (think of the tiny differences between making Ahh and Uhh), using your mouth movements and sounds as a model for hers. But when she learns the first few, it will become easier and easier to learn more.

TEACHING THE WHOLE WORD

Remember that one way to teach a routine (such as stacking plates) is to model-lead-test/check all the steps at once. Well, this is the same thing applied to speech. *First, make sure the child easily imitates all the sounds or syllables (skill elements) in the word.* For example, if you are going to teach her to imitate *eat* (*EeT),* first have her imitate the *Ee* and *T* sounds to firm these up. Then, when she is calm and is looking at your mouth, slowly and clearly…

1. Say, “Listen… EAT… Listen again…. EAT.” Or, “Say….EAT.” [Model]

2. If she comes close at all, tag-reinforce-verify, quickly.   
 If she does not say the *first* sound in the word (the *Ee* sound), practice it, and then prompt her mouth into the *Ee* position before you present the model the next time.   
 Or, if she does not imitate the last sound in the model (the *T* sound), practice it. Then present the model (EAT). When she says *Ee,* quickly prompt her mouth into the *T* position. Then tag-reinforce---because if the prompt worked, the right sound came out pretty well. (Read this paragraph again, please.)

Keep practicing the word several times, prompting sounds that need it. As soon as she starts to make a sound by herself, slowly fade out your prompt and give BIG reinforcement.

Here is what the method looks like. Notice model-lead-test/check. Note how we handle errors. Try variations that you think might work better for your child!

Please say this out loud along with me, several times.

*Parent or Teacher Child Parent or Teacher*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

You can add extras such as “Watch  
 my mouth”; “Listen again…”;  
 point to your own mouth; gently help  
 child to put her lips, jaw, tongue   
 in the right position; pause and punch,   
 such as “Get ready to say *Mmmmm*…. [Pause for 2 seconds, then hand signal   
 for “Go”]…*Mmmmmm.*”

1. Firm each sound part.

“Listen…Say….Eeeee*.*” “*Eeee.*” Tag-reinforce-verify.  
 Drag it out and show the “Yes, *Eeeeee.*” Repeat a mouth position for Eeee. few times to firm up.  
 Give a “Go” signal if needed.

“Listen… T*…*Quick and quiet. “*T”* Tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes,T…T*…*Get ready… Say…T.” T.” Repeat a few times to

Show the mouth position for T. firm it up.  
 Give a “Go” signal if needed.

2. Now use the lead (child says it with  
 you) to help child to imitate the whole  
 word.

“Listen…EeeeT…. Listen again… “*T.*” Does“Pretty good. Let’s try again.  
 EeeT…Say it WITH me….Get not say *Eee.* You said *T.* The word is…  
 ready…EaaaT.” Keep your mouth EEEAAT…EEEAAT.”  
 in the Eeee position. Give a “Go” Then

signal if needed. a. Practice Eeee so child is all ready to say it. Then

b. Prompt child to open her mouth in the *Ee* position *before* you present the model---EEEAAT.

“Let’s try again. Say EEEAT with “*EaaT*” Let’s say that the child’s  
 me…” Keep mouth in the position response (especially the *T*  
 for Eeee. Use “Go” signal if needed. sound) is *closer*. It may be

more like D (voiced). If so,  
 a. Tag-treat-verify the improvement. “Yes, Eeat.”  
 b. Practice saying T quick and quiet. c. Then lead the whole word again, maybe with a prompt to help the child to say T quick and quiet.   
 d. When the child imitates Eeat with you pretty well, tag-treat-verify and then use the test/check (child’s turn).

3. Test/check.

“Now YOUR turn… Remember …T…. “*EeaT*” Tag-reinforce-verify. “Yes,  
 T…quick and quiet. Say, EEEAAT.” EEAAT.” Repeat a few times  
 to firm it up and then go on  
 to another word that looks   
 and sounds different from Eat.

So, in this method, practice each sound in the word a few times. Then present the *whole* word as a model. Firm up and then prompt whichever sound does not come out right. If the child still does not put the sounds together in the word, try the next method.

BREAKING UP THE WORD INTO SYLLABLES AND PUTTING IT BACK TOGETHER

Sometimes a child imitates each sound or syllable in a word, but has a hard time putting them all together. Remember why? The way you say a sound in a word has to do with the sounds that are *next* to it in the word.

For example, you might be trying to teach the child to imitate MAMA, and every time you present the model---MAMA---he says *MAh*. When you *prompt* him to say the second Ma, he says it, but when you stop prompting him, all he says is *MAh*. Or, you might be trying to teach him to imitate EAT, and as long as you prompt his mouth into the *T* position he says *EeT*, but when you stop prompting, all he says is *Ee.* Or, you might be trying to teach her to imitate WATER, and as long as you prompt her mouth into the *WAw* position she says *WAwTR*, but when you stop prompting, all she says is *TR.*

If the child *leaves off* some of the sounds or syllables in the word, *break up the word into smaller sounds or syllables and put them back together a little at a time.*

One way to do this is the *forward* way. For example, if you are teaching the child to imitate GO (*GOh)* and he keeps leaving off the *G* sound, break up the word into *G* and *Oh.* Have him imitate *each one* a few times to make sure that he can. Then present the model for the *first* sound---G--and tag-reinforce-verify if he imitates. *Quickly* present the model for the *next* sound in the word---*Oh*---and tag-reinforce-verify if he imitates. Practice the two sounds in the *right order* a few times---first *G* and then *Oh.* Next present the *whole word,* just as in the first method above. But say the *G* sound in the model---*GOh*---with *stress.* Prompt the child by moving his mouth if he still needs it. Big tag-reinforce-verify when he does it pretty well!

Here is what it looks like when you put the word go (*GOh)* back together in the *forward* way.

*Parent or Teacher Child Parent or Teacher*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

“Say, GOh*.*” *“Oh*”“Close. You said *Oh*. The word is ***G****oh.*” Child left off the *G* sound, so parent or teacher breaks down the word and works on each part.

“Say, G.” “*G*” Quick reward. We don’t want to interrupt the flow. Quickly go to next sound.

“Say Oh.” “*Oh”*  Quick reward and go to the whole word.

“Say Goh.”“*Goh*”Big tag-treat-verify! Repeat the whole word a few times to firm it.

The idea is to *have the child imitate each sound or syllable of the word in the right order, several times,* to give her the idea of which sound comes first and which sound comes next. Then present the *whole* word model with *stress* on the sound she was leaving off, and *prompt* her to say that sound if she still needs help.

Another way to break up a word and put it back together is the *backward* way. This may work if the child imitates the *first* sound in the word but *leaves off* the *last* sound. For example, when you present the word model CAT *(KAT),* he imitates the *KA* syllable but not the *T* sound at the end.

All you have to do is *have him imitate the last sound or syllable several times.* For example, in the model *KAT* you would have him imitate the *T* several times until you are pretty sure he will imitate the *T* sound again the next time. Then, the next time, present the *whole* word, and *really stress the last sound (T) that he has been leaving off.*

The idea is to *give the child practice in imitating the sound* or *syllable*

*he has not been imitating.* Then have him imitate the whole word again. The *backward* way looks like this.

*Parent or Teacher Child Parent or Teacher*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

“Say *KAT.*” “*KA*” *“*Close! You said *KA.* The word is *KA****T*.”** Child did not imitate/say the last sound—*T*. So, parent or teacher breaks down the word and works on weak parts, starting with the last sound.

“Say ‘*T.’”* “*T”* Quick reward. Repeat to firm it. Then go to the whole word.

“Say *KAT*.’” “*KAT*” Big tag-treat-verify! Repeat the whole word a few times to firm it.

So, *if the child keeps leaving off one of the sounds in a word, first have him practice that sound by itself.. Then present the whole word model again, but when you do, make sure to stress the sound he has been leaving off.* If he leaves out the *T* sound in eat, practice the *T* sound a few times and then present the word model *EAT* (*EeT)* again, with *stress* on the *T* sound. Or, if he leaves off the *K* sound in cat, practice the *K* sound a few times and then present the word model CAT *(KAT)* again, with *stress* on the *K* sound. Prompt his mouth if he still needs it. If these two methods do not work very well on a word or sound, try the next method.

SHAPING ONE WORD INTO ANOTHER

Sometimes there are sounds or syllables that you just cannot prompt very well and that are hard for a child to imitate, like *Y* (you), *BL* (blue), *GL* (glue), or R (run). One way to help her to imitate words that have hard sounds or syllables is to *start with a word that is close to the one you want to teach her but has easier sounds. Then slowly shape how she says the word you were after.* How? Slowly raise the tag point!

A good example is the word blue *(BLU).* For many children, the *BL* sound is hard. So *instead of working* on *BLU, work* on *BUh-LU,* which sounds a lot like *BLU,* but is easier to say. Try it yourself! Once the child can imitate *BUh-LU,* start *shaping responses from BUh-LU to saying BLU.* This means that you now have to get her to *stop saying the Uh sound in the middle* No big deal*.*

1. One way to get rid of the extra *Uh* sound is to *present the word model*

*without* the *Uh* sound in it. In other words, do not say *BUh-LU* as a model anymore; just say *BLU* slowly. Give the child big reinforcement every time she comes close to imitating *BLU* without the *Uh* in it.

2. Another way to get rid of the extra *Uh* sound is to *chorus along with her.* For example, present the model *(BLU),* and when she starts to say *B,* jump in and start imitating the model *along with her* so that she hears the model (*BLU)* without the *Uh* in it.

3. A third way is to quickly *prompt* her to say the *LU* sound in *BLU* before she gets a chance to say *BUh­ LU,* In other words, after she says the *B* sound, you quickly prompt the next sound---the *LU.*

You can do the same thing with words like apple, bring, climb, or bye. If the child has a hard time saying the *PL* sound in apple (APL), teach him to say *A-POoL* (as in bOok). Or instead of bring *(BREeNG),* teach him to say *BUh-REeNG.* And if he has a hard time saying Bye ( *BIY),* teach him to say *BAh- Ee.* Once he can say these easier words with the *extra* sounds in them, *slowly* teach him to say the words correctly without the extra sounds by (1) presenting the word model as it should be *without* the extra sound; (2) *chorusing* the word along with him; and (3) *prompting* him to say the word without the extra sound.

There are a few other ways to *shape hard words from easier ones.* For example, if the child cannot say a certain vowel sound very well, *put in a different vowel that he can say.* Later, you can put in the right vowel sound. For instance, if he cannot say the *Oh* sound in the word go (*GOh* ), you may be able to teach him to say *GU* instead. This will give him practice in moving his mouth from the *G* position to a vowel position that is close to the one you want. Notice how both *Oh*  and *U* (as in tune) end with pursed lips. Once he imitates *GU,* shape the *GU* into *GOh* (go) by giving him more prompting on the mouth position for the *Oh* sound and by holding back on the tag-reinforcement until he says something closer to GO*h.*

Another example is the word you *(YU).* Many children have a hard time saying the *Y* sound when it is at the beginning of a word. So, instead of working on *YU,* teach the child to say *Ee-YU,* because the mouth position for the *Ee* sound is very *close* to the mouth position for the *Y* sound. Say *Ee-YU* to yourself slowly. Notice how the *YU* flows right from the *Ee* position. Once the child imitates *Ee-YU,* start to fade out the extra *Ee* sound.

**Summary of Methods for Hooking Up Basic Sounds and Syllables into Words**

1. Start with easy words that have sounds in them the child can already say. They should also be words he can put to use in many places.

2. Make sure that he imitates all of the sounds and syllables in the words rather well. Practice imitating the sounds and syllables before you put them together into a word. For example, before you work on water *(WAwTR),* have him imitate *WAw* and *TR* a few times.

3. Start by teaching him to imitate the *whole* word; for instance, water. If he any sound in the word *prompt* that sound the next time you present the model--WATER.

4. If he keeps on having trouble imitating a sound or syllable in the word, have him *practice* that sound or syllable by itself. Then present the model for the whole word again, *stressing* the sound or syllable he was having trouble with. Also, *prompt* that sound or syllable. For example, if he leaves out the W sound in water, have him practice imitating W until firm. Then present the model---WATER­--with *stress* on the W sound. Prompt his mouth into the W position first if you have to.

5. If he still has trouble imitating a hard sound or syllable in a word, switch to an *easier* word that is *close* to the one you want. For instance, if she cannot imitate the *BL* sound in blue *(BLU),* teach her to imitate *BUh-LU* instead. Once she imitates the easier word, *shape* saying the harder one. In other words, teach her to say *BLU* without the extra *Uh* sound by presenting only the correct model (*BLU,* not *BUh-LU),* by *chorusing the correct model (BLU)* along with her; and by *prompting* her to leave out the *Uh* sound.

Figures 3 and 4 in Section 6 showed how children learned to imitate many new words in home programs. During Verbal Imitation sessions, their parents taught them how to say basic sounds and tohook up sounds into words. The rest of the day, their parents taught them to *use* sounds and words in a *functional way* toname and ask for what they wanted, as shown in the book on Functional Speech. Look at the lines for “Sounds” and “Words.” The children were hooking up new sounds into many words, so that by the end of 7 weeks Steven had learned to imitate 85 new words, and by the end of 9 weeks Nancy had learned to imitate 41 new words.

**Some Ways to Make Sure That the Child Has Success**

There are many tricks to help the child imitate words and help you handle little problems that may come up.

1. *Stress the Sound or Syllable He Is Having Trouble With.* Sometimes a child will *leave off* the first sound or syllable. For instance, he imitates *AT* instead of *KAT* (CAT). And sometimes he will leave off the last sound or syllable. For instance, he imitates *Ee* instead of *EeT* (EAT). So, when you present the word model, *stress* the sound or syllable he leaves off. And reinforce when he imitates that sound even a little better.

2. *Showing Her How to Make the Right Sound.* When the child has a hard time imitating a certain sound or syllable in a word, *stress* that sound or syllable, give her *practice,* and *prompt* it. And also you should *show* her how to say the correct sound or syllable by opening your mouth wide, showing her how tomove her tongue or lips. Do this *while* you are presenting the model. For instance, if she is having trouble with the *L* sound in blue, open your mouth wide and show her how to make the *L* sound when you are saying the model BLUE. Use a *mirror* toshow him what her tongue and lips look like when she makes the different sounds.

3. *Chorusing.* Chorusing is a good method for handling many little problems. It means that, when the child starts to imitate a model, you chorus it along with him. Use chorusing to help a child say the sound or syllable he keeps leaving out, or to help him to leave out an extra sound he keeps putting in. The idea is that, just at the time he is starting to say the word the wrong way, you are showing him the right way. For example, when he is leaving out a sound, or is about to leave out a sound, he hears and sees you say it.

4. *Positive Practice, or Repeat until firm.* Positive practice means going over the steps in a little routine to make sure the child has them down in the right order. Saying a word is a routine of small behaviors---mouth movements. If the child leaves out a certain sound in a word or says it wrong, work on that sound a few times, *but also have him say the whole word again so that he learns where each sound goes in the word.* But no more than three times, especially if the child is making errors. Identify the weak elements; firm these up; then come back to the harder examples. At the same time, work on words with which the child has been successful, to maintain enjoyment.

For example, if you are working on the word cookie, and the child leaves out the *K* sound (he says Coo-ie), give him practice on the *K* sound by itself a few times, *and then have him imitate cookie again before you go on to another word.*

5. *Fading Out Extra Sounds.* Sometimes a child will put in an extra sound. This often happens at the *end* of a word. Instead of imitating the word model, CAT *(KAT),* he says *KAT-Uh;* or instead of imitating EGG (EG), he imitates *EG-Uh.* This can happen if *you* have stressed the *end* of the word to help him imitate the last sound or syllable. In other words, the child is imitating *your* stress.

This is not a pretty easy thing to correct. Usually, it’s enough to *whisper* the last sound in the word model. And then prompt the child to close his mouth at the end of the word *before* he has a chance to add the extra sound.

6. *Teaching Her to Make Sounds Without the Voice.* Sounds like *GUh* and *BUh* have a little bit of voice in them. Sounds like *KUh* and *PUh* have the same mouth movements as *GUh* and *BUh,* but no voice. Say *GUh* and *KUh* to yourself to see how *GUh* uses the voice but *KUh* does not.

Sometimes a child will use her voice for sounds that should not have voice in them. For example, she says *GUhM* (gum) instead of *KUhM* (come), or she says *Bly* instead of *Ply* (pie). An easy way to teach her not to put in the voice is to *whisper* the UNvoiced sound. For example, when you present the model for *Ply* (pie), you say *P* (whispered)*Iy*. Quick and quiet.

Another way is to tag-reinforce every time she correctly leaves out the voice, even if she leaves it out only a little bit.

7. *Teaching Him to Leave Out a Stop.* Sometimes a child adds a *stop* between two sounds or syllables. Instead of saying *BEe,* he says B/Ee; or instead of saying *KAT* (CAT), he says *K/AT.* What is happening is that he is closing his throat for a second between the two sounds. This can happen when you have been teaching him to imitate a word one sound at a time, as in *B-Ee* or *BUh-Ee.* After a while, the child starts to take a short break in between the *B* and *Ee* sounds.

This is pretty easy tocorrect, but it may take time. Sometimes, all you have todo is *chorus* with the child *while* he is imitating the word, and keep *dragging out* the sound that comes *right before* the little stop he has been putting in. For example, if the child says *K/AT* instead of *KAT* (cat), the next time you present the model *(KAT),* wait for him to start to imitate the *K* sound and then jump in and *chorus KAAAAAT,* so that he really hears and sees that there is no stop or break between the *K* and *AT*; it is just one stream of sounds. Also reward him whenever he says the word with less of a stop in it.

8. *Self-Talk.* It will be easier for the child to learn to say and use words if he hears people using those words during the day. When he is near you, use simple words to talk about what you are doing and about what he is doing. We talked about this before in the section on Teaching The Child To Pay Attention To The Speech Of Others (VI1.) It is important to use the same words you are teaching him to imitate. For example, if you are teaching him food words, use these words when you are in the kitchen with him. And reward him whenever she imitates what you say.

9. *Other People and Places.* As the child learns to imitate words, spread them to other places and people. Have other people slowly get involved in sessions. Coach the child's brothers and sisters, neighbors, and relatives to get him to imitate certain words at the right time and place. This is item VI11. Please read it in section 2, evaluation.

**Making Words Functional**

As soon as the child imitates a word fairly well, use the next book, Functional Speech, to teach her to *use* the word *functionally* to *ask for* and *name* things she wants. The idea is to apply Grandma’s Law. For instance, if the child imitates EAT, have her say Eat before you give her a snack.

At first it is fine if she just *imitates* the word EAT before you she eats. Do not hold out until she says the word perfectly. *Accept a little less---at her point of success.* It is more important for her to *use* a word at the right time and place than for her to say it perfectly all the time. Later, you can hold out for better imitations and prompt her to say Eat more on her own.

When the child imitates enough words to make even a simple *phrase* (for example, More food, Go bye-bye, or Pick up), start teaching her to hook up those words into a *phrase* or *simple sentence.* The next section, Section 8, tells how to do this.

**9. IMITATING PHRASES AND SIMPLE SENTENCES (VI10)**

Teach a child to hook up words into *phrases* and *sentences* the same way you taught him to hook up sounds and syllables into *words.* Here are some steps to follow.

1. Start with words he already imitates well. Use short words: wanna, eat, I, more, out, and go. Also, start with phrases he can use in many places, like Go out, Wanna eat, Eat more.

Make a list of simple phrases and sentences to start working on. Write them in the column for that week on the Speech Table. When the child imitates or says a phrase or sentence very well and about 90 percent of the time, *underline it. Chart* the number of new phrases and sentences he learns to imitate each week. And when you teach him to *use* a phrase or sentence to answer a question (Where are you going? ... *Go out*.) or to ask for something (What do you want? ... *Want eat.*), *circle it.*

2. Before working on a whole phrase or sentence model (I WANNA EAT), practice imitating each word (I, WANNA, EAT) a few times. Reward correct imitations. Also practice imitating any sounds that need firming up.

3. Then have the child imitate each word in the *right order:* first I, then WANNA, then EAT. Repeat a few times. At first, you might reward after he imitates each word.   
4. Then have him imitate I, then WANNA, and EAT, and reward only after he imitates *all three* words.

Breaking down the whole phrase into word (and hard sound) parts, practicing the parts, and then reassembling the words into the whole phrase will firm the parts and teach the child the right order of the words in the phrase.

5. After doing this for a few sessions, present the whole phrase or sentence model (I WANNA EAT), to see how much of it he imitates. If he leaves out a certain word, repeat the whole model and prompt him to say the word he left out before. For example, if he repeats I WA instead of I WANNA EAT, prompt him to say the *N* sound when it is time for it in the phrase. You should also *chorus* the phrase or sentence along with him when he starts to imitate it.

6. If he still leaves out some of the words, *break down* the phrase or sentence into words and put it back together a little at a time. For instance, if he keeps leaving out eat, work on I wanna over and over, and on eat over and over. Then present the I WANNA part of the model and, if he imitates correctly, present the EAT part of the model. Repeat this several times. Come back to it later!

It should look something like this.

*Parent or Teacher Child Parent or Teacher*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

“I WANNA EAT” “I wanna” “Close! You said I wanna. We say  
 I wanna EAT.” Child did not imitate  
 the final word, so parent or teacher  
 breaks down the phrase or sentence  
 and works on the weak part.

“I WANNA.” “I wanna” Quick reinforcement and then on to

the word the child missed.  
  
 “EAT” “Eat” Quick reinforcement. Then parent or teacher repeats these two steps (imitate I WANNA and then imitate EAT) until the child goes quickly from one to the other.

“I WANNA EAT.” “I wanna.” “Close!” or “You almost got it!” or “Let’s try again.”  
 Child still did not say the final word, so parent or teacher **quickly** repeats the model, but this time prompts the EAT part.

“I WANNA EAT.” “I wanna eat.” Big tag-treat-verify! Repeat the whole   
 phrase a few times to firm it. Prompt by mouthing or whispering eat, touching child’s mouth.

If the child keeps leaving out the word I, and just imitates WANNA EAT instead of I WANNA EAT, have him imitate I several times. Then present the whole model phrase, I WANNA EAT. Prompt him to say the word I first.

7. *Chorusing* will be a big help. Present the whole model phrase, I WANNA EAT. As soon as he starts to imitate, start chorusing the phrase with him. Put *stress* on the word he has been leaving out. Chorusing a phrase with a child who leaves out the last word (eat) looks like this.

Child Says: “I wanna………(now child joins in) eat.”

*Parent or Teacher   
Presents Model* “I WANNA EAT”

Parent or “I WANNA *EEEEEET.*”  
 Teacher says:

Chorus the phrase until you can slowly *fade* yourself out of the chorus.

8. When the child comes close to imitating the phrase, use Grandma’s Law to get him to use it around the house or school. At first, it is enough if he just imitates the phrase to get what he wants. For example:

*Parent or Teacher Child Parent or Teacher*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

“What do you want?... Tag-reinforce with what child

Say, ‘WANNA EAT.’” “Wanna eat.” wants to eat and verify by repeating. “Yes, wanna eat.”

On next ties, parent or teacher fades   
 out the WANNA EAT prompt.

“What do you want?... “Wanna eat.” Big tag-reinforce-verify. “You said

Say, “WWWAAA….” WANNA EAT by yourself. Let’s try  
 again.” Fade even more of the   
 prompt.

9. As the child learns to imitate a phrase or sentence, add a new one to your list to work on, but practice the old ones a few times each session and during the day.

10. Remember to have other people work with the child on phrases and sentences as she gets better at imitating them.

Figures 3 and 4, on the progress of Steven and Nancy, show how they learned to hook up words into phrases and simple sentences. Before his Verbal Imitation program started, Steven said only two phrases or sentences: “Come on in” and “Hi, Judy.” At the end of six weeks, Steven had learned 16 more phrases or sentences. Before Nancy’s Verbal Imitation program started, she did not say any phrases or sentences, but after nine weeks she was saying 14 (such as “I love you,” “Go see Grammy,” and “I want to go out”). Of course, as soon as the children were pretty good at imitating a phrase or sentence, their parents taught them to *use* it at the right time and place.

The last section, Section 9, tells you how to handle certain problems that may come up, no matter whether you are working on basic sounds, syllables, words, phrases, or sentences.

**10. HANDLING COMMON PROBLEMS**

If the child stops paying attention, keeps making the same error, starts leaving the table, or begins throwing tantrums, look to the last book in the series, Reducing and Replacing Problem Behaviors. This means that you might first try to reward desirable behavior more often, switch to sessions on a different skill area for a few days, or reward easier behaviors during sessions. If the child keeps being inattentive, leaving the table, and so forth, you can try the following methods.

**A Change of Scenery**

One thing to do is stop having sit-clown sessions for a few weeks. Instead, work on Verbal Imitation in a more natural way around the house and school, and in public places. For example, have the child imitate words like UP, DOWN, and GO while you are roughhousing with him; have him imitate food words (EAT, MORE, FRENCH FRIES) when you go out to eat; and have him imitate words that describe things around him when you go for a drive or a walk (CAR, STREET, SKY, TREE). Taking a break from sit-down sessions is often all that is needed to get the child back to paying attention. In fact, if he learns just as fast away from the table, spend less time working at the table and more time working in everyday places.

**Modeling**

People learn a lot by watching and imitating others. People really learn fast this way when they see the other person being *rewarded.* You can use this method *(modeling)* to help a child if he keeps making errors or if he stops imitating.

Just have another person that *does imitate,* maybe another child, sit with your child at the table or wherever you want your child to imitate you. Present the model sound, word, phrase, or sentence to your child. *If she does not imitate or if she imitates incorrectly, quickly tum to the other child and present the same model. Give the other child a big reward for imitating you.* Then turn back to *your child and present the model again. Reward if she imitates this time.* You may have to run a few sessions before the child finds out that she is not going to be rewarded if she does not imitate, but that she and the other child will be rewarded when they do imitate. Make sure you give your child *big* rewards when she imitates.

**Meals**

Of course you do not want to be always using food as a reward or reinforcer. You want to reward a child’s speech with Social Rewards and Activity Rewards. But sometimes it takes a *strong* reinforcer like food to get his speech started. Later, if the child keeps being disruptive during sessions (even though you are prompting him), you might start using bites of his food during meals to reinforce sitting big and correct imitations.

*But, if he leaves the table or throws tantrums during the whole meal,*

*that is the end of the meal. He has to wait for the next meal before he gets another chance. If he misses a meal because he was very disruptive or did not pay attention, have his next meal a few hours later.* In other words, give plenty of chances to earn his meals during the day, and make sure that you are prompting and rewarding him enough. *Lower the tag point* or reinforcement point so that the child’s attention and effort are reinforced.

Some children make you think that this will go on and on. *But it will not.* As long as the food you are using is a strong reward, and as long as the speech models are *easy* enough for her to imitate, it will take only a few days to a week before the disruptive behavior slows down during sessions. Then you can go back to your usual teaching sessions. But *start off with behaviors that are pretty easy so the child’s sitting, attention, and effort are reinforced.*

This method---meals---is last for a good reason. If you are working on easy enough models, prompting good enough imitations, and immediately tag-reinforcing improved behaviors, you should not have to go back to using meals. If problem behaviors start up, there is usually something wrong with the teaching program or the way it is being run. Look closely at how you are teaching. *Make sure that you are doing everything you can to make it easy for the child to make correct imitations and be rewarded.* Only then should you think about going back to using meals for a week or so.

**Table 2. Speech Table for Verbal Imitation And Functional Speech  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** *Week of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_*

*Basic Words Phrases Basic Sounds, Words  
 Sounds and Phrases and Sentences  
 Sentences to Work On*

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Make a copy for each week. As the week goes on, write the basic sounds, words, phrases, or sentences you are working on, even if you worked on them in earlier weeks. When the child learns to *imitate* a basic sound, word, phrase, or sentence, underline it or that week; for example, “EAT.”

When the learns to *use* a basic sound, word, phrase, or sentence in a functional way (to ask for things or answer questions), put a circle around it that week; for instance, “EAT.” Note: We’ll use this information when we evaluate your child’s Functional Speech in the next book in the series---Functional Speech.

Write down any basic sounds, words, phrases, or sentences the child is having trouble with in the column headed Basic Sounds, Words, Phrases, and Sentences to Work On. Make copies of this blank table.

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