

# My Child Makes A Lot of Mistakes When Talking. Should I Worry?

By Ernest Roebuck, CCC-SLP

Learning to speak is an extremely difficult undertaking for children, and they are naturally going to make mistakes along the way. *Lots* of mistakes!

Most children eventually drop the errors in their speech and develop typical speech patterns. Some even seem to get the knack fairly quickly, and are speaking like “little adults” at an early age. Other children, however, seem to have trouble long after friends their age are “speaking normally.”

The chart below gives some general guidelines for when you can expect a child to have mastered certain sounds.



By Age...	90% Of Children Have Mastered...
2	p, d, m, w, h, n
3	t, b, k, g
4 – 5	f, v, y
5 – 7	s, z, j, l, r, sh, ch, th, blends

We see that the “l” and “r” sounds, for example, are among some of the last to develop. Even though some younger children can start using these sounds quickly, we don’t actually *expect* them to fully master the

“l” and “r” sounds until they are between five and seven years old.

This means that if your three-year-old is saying things like “New Yawk” (for *New York*) or “pway” (instead of *play*) or “yeh-yo” (instead of *yellow*), errors like these involving the “l” or “r” sounds are actually typical for age three.

But what if your child seems to be making a *lot* of these errors, should you be concerned? Maybe. Here are some other questions to consider:

Do friends or other family members have a hard time understanding your child?

Is your child frustrated because you don’t understand his/her speech?

Is your child unaware of the fact that people are having difficulty understanding them?

If you answer ‘yes’ to any of these questions, it’s time to seek a professional opinion. A certified Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) from WestField Speech Solutions can administer a standardized test that compares your child’s skills to other children his/her age. These test results, in addition to other information, will determine whether your child requires speech therapy.

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