

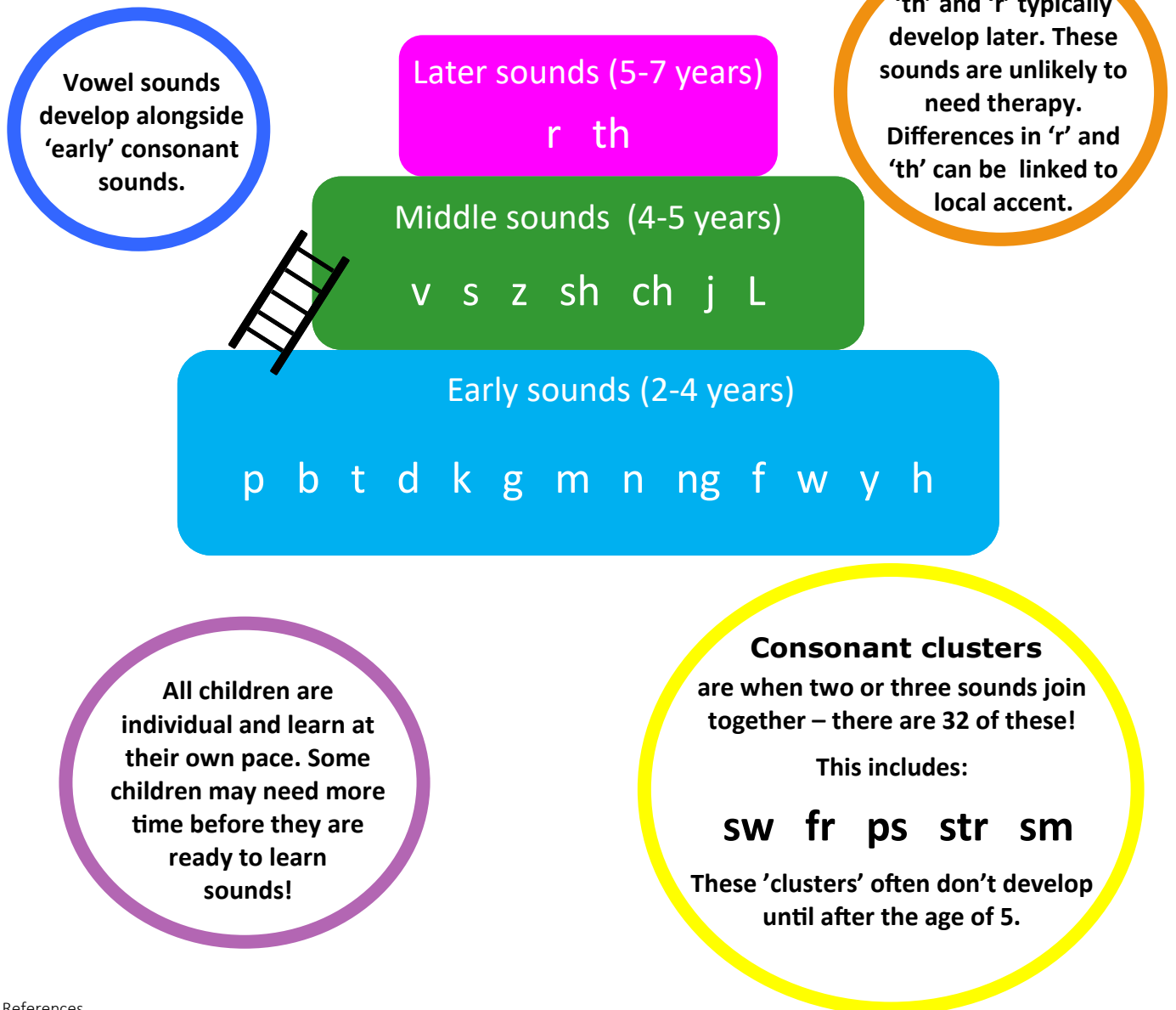
Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

Speech Sound Development

This leaflet is about how children learn to say the different sounds that make up words.

Speech sounds are either consonants, such as 'p' 'n' 'f', or vowels, such as 'a' 'e' 'o'.

By the age of 5-7 years, most children have learnt to use these sounds and can be understood by other people. Some sounds take longer to learn than others. They can be grouped into 'early' 'middle' and 'later' sounds.



References

- McLeod and Crowe (2018). Cross Linguistic Consonant Acquisition. *American Journal of Speech and Language Pathology*. 27, 1546-1571.
- Shriberg, L. D. (1993). Four new speech and prosody-voice measures for genetics research and other studies in developmental phonological disorders. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, 36, 105-140
- Stackhouse, J., & Wells, B. (1997). *Children's Speech and Literacy Difficulties 1: A Psycholinguistic Framework*. London: Whurr Publishers.

Strategies to support your child's speech

What you can do to help:

- Avoid correcting your child's speech sound mistakes or asking them to say words again. Instead, **repeat** the word back to them in a natural way e.g. 'tar' → 'oh yes, a car'.
- Be positive about **what** your child is saying rather than focusing on **how** they are saying it.
- Use a **slow pace**, with lots of **pauses**, so your child can clearly hear your speech. This should naturally help them to slow down their talking.
- Talk about things that you can both **see**.
- **Reduce background noise** when talking to your child, for example, turn off the TV/ music/ tablet.

What to do if you don't understand what your child has said:

- Ask them to say it again, but in a **positive way** e.g. 'my ears missed that, can you tell me again?'
- Ask your child to '**show you**'.
- Ask a few **key questions**.
- **Repeat back** what you did understand so your child only has to repeat what you have missed.
- Ask your child to tell you in a **different way**; they could try using a different word, using **actions or gesture** or older children could draw or write the word.