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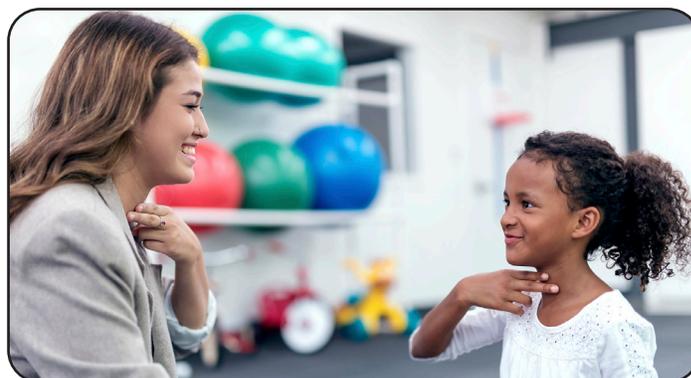
Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Voiceless vs. Voiced Sounds

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There are several sounds in the English language that sound almost the same, but have slight differences in how they are produced. Have you ever thought about how the /p/ sound is different from the /b/ sound? Both are made by pressing the lips together, both are made by releasing air out of the mouth. The slight difference is called "voicing." The /p/ sound is voiceless (the voice is "turned off") and /b/ is voiced (the voice is "turned on" due to the vocal folds vibrating). There are several sound pairs like this that are very similar except for voicing.

When children have difficulty using correct voicing, it can affect the meaning of what they are trying to say. For example, what if a child told you "the big dog parked when the peas chased after it!"? It doesn't make sense, does it? What the child was trying to say, but had incorrect voicing, was "the big dog barked when the bees chased after it!" Voicing makes a big difference!



The following is a list of the voiceless and voiced consonant sounds, example words for each sound to show the difference that voicing can make in a word, and tips for eliciting correct voicing:

VOICELESS		VOICED	
/p/	park	/b/	bark
/t/	town	/d/	down
/k/	coat	/g/	goat
/f/	fan	/v/	van
/s/	sip	/z/	zip
"sh"	sure	"zh"	treasure
"ch"	chain	"j"	Jane
"th"	thigh	"th"	thy



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(cont.)

Tips:



- Ask the child to put a hand on his/her throat, and then make an “ahhh” (or any vowel) sound. Because all vowels are voiced, the child will be able to feel the vibration by touching his/her throat.



- Once the child can feel this vibration, you can use phrases to prompt correct production of voiced consonants. Some examples of these could be: “make it buzz,” “turn your voice on,” “use your voice power,” “make it a noisy sound,” or any other phrase that the child can understand.



- Have the child discriminate between voiced and voiceless sounds by pressing his/her hand to your own throat. Start by saying “ahhh” so they can feel the vibration. Next, make a voiceless sound (p, t, k, f, s, sh, ch, th) and ask them what they felt. Alternate between voiced and voiceless sounds and have the child identify them.



- If the child is still having difficulty turning his/her voice on and off, kazoos are the perfect tool to use to teach this skill. Have the child blow into the kazoo. It will only make the buzzing sound when the child turns his/her voice on.



Voicing might seem like a small part of saying sounds correctly, but it can have a big impact on how words are produced. It may take some time for a child to grasp the concept of voiceless and voiced sounds, but once they do, they will be able to tell you all about the big dog that barked when the bees chased after it!

Related Handy Handouts®:

- [640 – Get to Know Your Speech Sounds: Introduction \(Part 1\)](#)
- [627 – What is Articulation?](#)
- [466 – What’s the Difference? Articulation Disorder vs. Phonological Disorder](#)
- [201 – Types of Articulation Errors—A Simple Guide](#)

Resources:

“How to ‘Turn Your Voice On’ – Teaching the Difference between Voiced & Unvoiced Phonemes,” accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.arktherapeutic.com/blog/post/1449>

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