



Slow Over-Articulated Speech

What is slow over articulated speech?

Slow over-articulated speech is a different way of talking. It slows down speech and the consonants are produced with more emphasis. Speech is a motor movement and when little children are learning to talk sometimes they need time to figure out the movements to make the sounds. Talking like this can help your child.

What does it sound like?

Slow over-articulated speech has four different parts:

1. **Vowel prolongation** – Vowels hold intelligibility of speech. Generally, they are easier to produce than most consonants. All vowels require vocalization. They sound different depending on jaw height, lip and tongue movement. When you prolong or vocalize the vowel for longer, then the child has more time to see what you are doing and try to copy you. It also sets them up for more success for consonants in the final position.
2. **Consonant Over-Articulation** – Consonants are a little more complicated than vowels! Sometimes we can prolong the sounds in some consonants like /m/, /n/, /l/, /r/, /s/ and /z/. Other times the sounds pop out quickly like /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, or /g/. And sometimes they do a little bit of both like the “ch” sound! Consonants often have a voiced and a voiceless pair. Think about /p/ and /b/. You say them the same in your mouth but /p/ has no voice. Now knowing what we know about consonants...When we produce over-articulated consonants, we want to think about making the consonants BIGGER. That might mean a little more tension in our articulators (ex: lips & tongue), pushing a little more air out or slightly increasing volume.

NOTE: If a voiceless consonant is in the final position DON'T add a vowel to it. Instead of making the voiceless sound louder by producing a vocalization think about pushing more air and having more tension in your articulators. When you vocalize you change the production. For example: Let's practice with the word “up”. First try incorrectly and add a vowel to the end “uuuupp-uuuhh”. Now think about pushing the air more for the “P” but don't vocalize afterwards. “uuuu P”. Other voiceless sounds to look out for: P, T, K. N and L aren't voiceless but be careful not to add an extra vocalization at the end of these sounds too.

3. **Pausing** – When you focus most of your attention on the vowels and the consonants, then the pausing comes in naturally. For example, if you say “big car” when doing step one (vowel prolongation) and step two (over-articulated consonants) then it would be nearly impossible to not pause between the “g” in “big” and the “c” sound in “car”. When we speak the way we normally do, then the “g” and the “k” sound would get blended together “bi-car” instead of “biG --- Car”. It is normal to blend sounds together. We call it co-articulation. It helps us talk in a more efficient manner. But when a child is learning to talk for the first time, then they might need to hear each sound individually. The pausing helps them process the different sounds. Provide pause when it feels natural. Overall rate of speech should be slower than usual.

4. **Tone** – This is the WAY we say the words together. It isn't just the sounds but the rhythm. Having an excited tone with a sing-songy quality makes it more interesting for children to listen to. Increased interest leads to increased attention. More attention means the more possibility for imitation! Some children find it easier to imitate a singing pattern. Some children attend better to different volumes of speech. See what feels right to you and what your child responds to.

When and How do you use it?

It's not possible to talk like this all the time! When you talk for your child to understand, you your speech will naturally be quicker. Use this model when you want your child to imitate your speech. It is good to use when...

- Your child said something that was difficult to understand. After you figure out what it was, model with a slow over articulated model. For example, if the child said, "ca" and pointed to a cat. You might say, "caaaT. Look. CaT."
- You are modeling what you want your child to say. Your child hands you a container with snack inside. This would be a good opportunity to model, "ooooPeN snack. Open."
- Multisyllabic words are harder to say, but using an over-articulated model can help your child. If your child deletes a syllable then you can over-articulate that part of the word. Taping out or clapping the syllables shows the word has more than one part and it can help you slow your rate of speech.
- Point to your mouth or bring the desired item up to your face. Having the child look at your mouth moving gives them more information.
- You might model with the slow over-articulated model the first time you say the target, then the second time you say it naturally. It gives the child the opportunity to hear it both ways.

After a while, when your child hears you talk like this, they will know you want them to imitate what you say.

Repeat

- Keep using the strategy. You can use it at home. You can use it at the park. You can use it anywhere.
- If you notice your child needing more help with a specific word or sound, then you might use this strategy more for modeling the targeted words/sounds.
- You might keep repeating 1-5 targeted words like this while engaged in an activity. For example, you might say "bye bye ____" to all of the farm animals when you clean them up. In the car, you might say "Go" when the stop light turns green.

Talk to your child's speech therapist to better understand how to best use an over-articulated model with your child.