

Cued Speech for American English

Visually providing the building blocks needed for communication, language development, and literacy.



/d, p, zh/



/ee, ur/



/k, TH, v, z/



/aw, e, ue/



/h, r, s/



/a, i, oo/



/b, n, wh/



consonant alone



/f, m, t/
vowel alone



1/2" - 3/4" down
/uh/



/l, sh, w/



1" forward
/ah, oe/



/g, j, th/



/ay, oi/



/ch, ng, y/



/ie, ou/

Many people question whether Cued Speech can be used with infants and toddlers. It can! Cued Speech can provide an avenue for parents to convey the language of their home to their child who is deaf or hard-of-hearing as soon as a hearing loss has been identified. How and when should they introduce cued English to their very young child?

The short answer is *immediately*. Once a hearing loss has been identified, you can learn how to cue and begin cueing just as you would speak to a hearing baby. As a baby is cooed over and cuddled, parents can begin the process of teaching language to their child simply by cueing all they say. Parents who are deaf and already know how to cue are at an advantage as they will naturally begin cueing immediately on the birth of their child, whether the baby is hearing or deaf. Any child can acquire the language of the home from the parents using Cued Speech. The sooner and more consistently your child is cued to, the more likely she will begin imitating cues and start cueing and communicating with you and others.

Why should I cue with my baby?

For many parents, the natural language of the home is spoken. Cueing is a way for parents to visually convey their natural “family” language to their child who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. Cueing enables them to communicate with all members of the family simultaneously, without switching between languages.

Literacy development is also important to all parents. Early cueing allows children to absorb and understand the different phonemes, or sounds, that make up their native language. They will naturally develop one critical factor of “emergent literacy,” or reading readiness: phonemic awareness. With Cued Speech, you can provide your baby or toddler with a language-rich environment that makes it easier to communicate all the things in their world.

How old does a child need to be in order to cue to her?

You can cue to your child from birth, just as you would speak or sign to her from birth.

Does my child need hearing in order to cue? Can I cue to a child who is profoundly deaf?

Cued Speech was originally intended for use with children who are profoundly deaf or have no usable residual hearing. These children thrive on the visual access to language that cueing can provide. In addition, cueing has proved to be

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effective for children who are hard-of-hearing, helping to clarify auditory information in noisy situations. Hearing children with speech, language, and/or auditory processing problems can also gain tremendous benefit from cueing.

What/when should I cue to my baby?

Ideally, you would cue *everything* that you say during the normal course of your day. Great times to cue to your baby are all the “routine” parts of your day—during mealtimes, diaper-changing or toilet training, running errands, bath time, bedtime, and at the grocery store, as well as during playtime or other special family occasions/outings. Whenever you talk, cue. Don’t worry if your baby is not looking directly at you at first; she will eventually realize that what you’re doing is communicating and start paying attention.

Research in language development shows that babies learn words used in isolation first. This is good news for parents new to cueing. Cueing one word (such as *ball*) and building upon it (*red ball* or *little red ball*) is helpful and a natural process for language development in young children.

How can I become fluent so that I can cue to my baby quickly?

The short answer is—*practice, practice, practice!* One way to increase your speed is to write down a list of some things that you say to your baby each day and practice those until you can cue them easily and quickly.

For example, you can cue the words *mother, father, grandma, grandpa*, as well as the names of other family members, including brothers, sisters and family pets, and close friends and relatives that the child interacts with regularly. You can also cue the names of common foods and household items (*milk, juice, cereals, water, eggs, cheese, chicken, apples, coat/jacket, bottles, cup, spoon, etc.*), as well as, favorite toys (*ball, bear, baby*) and so forth.

Words and phrases in your repertoire that are quick and easy to cue will increase your overall speed as you add “unfamiliar” words to your child’s language. Common phrases might include the following:

“It’s time for...”	(bed, nap, lunch, dinner)
“Do you want...”	(juice, blankie)
“Go get the...”	(ball, bear, book)
“Give (me/her/him) the ...”	(toy, bottle)
“Where is...”	(Dad? Mom? the kitty?)
“Please, ...”	(come here, sit down)
“I love you!”	

Can the baby cue back to me? When?

Yes, your baby should be able to approximate some cues back to you after a while. The time frame of when a baby might begin to cue has not yet been definitively established. There is some research in progress now that seems to suggest that a baby might develop some cue approximations or baby cues at the same time that hearing babies begin to speak or deaf babies begin to sign back to their parents, which is typically between 9 and 18 months of age.

Cueing, just like signing, requires some manual dexterity and fine motor skills, which may impact your baby’s ability to perfectly convey the entire system. Children who are hearing often have approximations or mispronunciations in their speech for difficult-to-produce sounds through the age of six or seven.

Cueing children will experience the same need to offer an approximation for a cue and develop expressive skills over time as you encourage them to cue.

Parents should encourage expressive cueing in their young children by looking for approximations and reinforcing the use of them. For example, a child might tap her throat or chest area with her pointer finger to indicate *daddy* and use an open hand at the throat to indicate *mommy*. All babies offer approximations of speech; observant parents will be able to identify cue babbling and attempts and can encourage their use as the baby's skills develop. Anecdotal evidence shows that babies will likely cue words with the easiest handshapes (5, 1, 6) and/or use one or two primary locations before correctly moving from one location to another.

Conclusion

To provide clear and consistent exposure to language, parents should cue as often as possible to their child as soon as they are able to do so. This will allow the child to acquire language as soon as possible, thereby also providing the best foundation for their child's literacy development. Parents should encourage their child to cue as soon as possible. Parents can visually provide the language of their home to their baby who is deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Resources

- Cornett, R.O., & Daisey, M.E. (Eds.). (2000). *The Cued Speech resource book for parents of deaf children* (2nd ed.). Cleveland: National Cued Speech Association.
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