

















Cues of 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	/uh/ <small>move 1/2" - 3/4" down</small>
	
/l, sh, w/	/ah, oe/ <small>move 1" forward</small>
	
/g, j, th/	/ay, oi/
	
/ch, ng, y/	/ie, ou/

Many people wonder whether cueing can be used with infants and toddlers. It can! Cued language can provide an avenue for parents to convey the language of their home to their child upon learning their child has been identified as deaf or hard of hearing. How and when should parents introduce cued language to their very young child?

The short answer is *immediately*. Once a child has been identified as deaf or hard of hearing, 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 their parents and siblings using cued language. The sooner and more consistently children are cued to, the more likely they will begin imitating cues and start cueing and communicating with you and others.

Why should I cue with my child?

For many parents, the natural language of the home is spoken. Cueing is a way for such parents to visually convey their home language to their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Cueing enables communication with all members of the family simultaneously without needing to switch 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 the spoken language(s) of their home. They will naturally develop one critical factor of "emergent literacy," or reading readiness: phonemic awareness. With cued language, you can provide your baby or toddler with a language-rich environment that makes it easier to communicate about all the things in their world.

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

You can cue to your child from birth, just as you would speak or sign to them from birth. While early access to language is critical, parents who learn about cued language when their child is older can start cueing immediately to maximize language gains.

Does my child need hearing in order to cue?

Can I cue to a child who is profoundly deaf?

In brief, you can cue to any child regardless of the level of hearing ability they have. The Cued Speech system was originally intended for use with children who are profoundly deaf or have nondetectable residual hearing. These children thrive on the visual access to language that cueing can provide. In addition, cueing has proved to be 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 challenges can also gain tremendous benefit from cueing.

What/when should I cue to my child?

Ideally, you would cue *everything* that you say during the normal course of your day. Great times to cue are all the “routine” parts of the day—during meal times, diaper changing or toilet training, running errands, bath time, bed time, and at the grocery store, as well as during play time, etc. Whenever you talk, cue. Don’t worry if your child is not looking directly at you at first; they will eventually realize that what you’re doing is communicating and start paying attention. Cueing with family members while the deaf or hard of hearing child is in the room also ensures they have access to what is being said when they observe that conversation.

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 a natural process for language development.

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

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

For example, you can cue the words *mother, father, grandma, grandpa*, as well as the names of other family members and family pets, and also 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, cheeses, 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 my baby cue back to me? When?

Yes, your baby should be able to cue back to you after consistent exposure. While no studies have been done, numerous anecdotes from parents who cued consistently with their babies since birth or within the first few months of birth indicate that babies begin approximating cueing around nine months of age, similar to signed and spoken approximations, with the first clear words occurring by 10 to 11 months of age. If your child is older, they typically will start expressively cueing back as their language and motor skills develop.

You should encourage expressive cueing in your children by looking for approximations and reinforcing the use of them. For example, your child might tap their throat or chest area with their pointer finger to indicate *daddy* and use an open hand at the throat to indicate *mommy*. Look for evidence of cue babbling and attempts, and encourage your baby to continue developing their expressive cueing skills. Anecdotal evidence from cueing families shows that babies generally begin with the easiest consonant handshapes of 5, 1, and 6 (see left side of cue chart on page one, where handshapes 1-8 are shown vertically), and/or use one or two primary vowel placement locations before correctly identifying and moving from one location to another.

Conclusion

To provide clear and consistent exposure to language, you should cue consistently to your child as you develop your skills. This will allow your child to acquire language as soon as possible, providing the best foundation for language and literacy development in your native language. You should also encourage your child to cue back as soon as possible, as this ensures clear communication and reinforcement of language use. If your child is able to use residual hearing and/or hearing devices, they may also verbalize spoken utterances while cueing.

Resources

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