

Consonant blends: choose a cluster rather than "all blends"

A consonant blend or cluster contains more than one consonant in sequence. S clusters, L clusters, and R clusters pose different demands. A plan for stop is not automatically a plan for train or flower. The clinician selects the cluster and task level for the individual child.

Key facts

- Educational guide for caregiver discussion, not a diagnostic checklist.
- Intended target and level: the child's individual SLP plan.
- A word's spelling does not reliably identify its sound.
- The examples below use common U.S. English pronunciations; adapt for dialect and language.

Word list by position

S clusters: spoon, star, skate, snake

L clusters: blue, flag, clock, glove

R clusters: tree, drum, frog, green

Build one route at a time

Choose one cluster family the SLP has assigned. Make a toy route with a star, a spoon, and a snake picture for selected S clusters. If only ST is assigned, use a narrower set instead. Let the child help plan the route and talk about where the objects go. The activity should support meaningful turns rather than speed drills.

Use only words your child understands. Allow pointing, play, or another communication method; participation does not require a spoken response on every turn. Ask your SLP what to model, which cue to use, and whether to practice listening, single words, or phrases. If the child is tired or

frustrated, finish the activity and discuss the plan with the clinician. Do not make a practice score a reward or a condition for ending play.

Sound development in context

Crowe and McLeod's single-consonant summary is not a universal cluster-mastery schedule. This population summary does not diagnose an individual child. Assessment considers communication needs, hearing, languages, dialect, and the whole sound system. If you are concerned, ask a licensed SLP for an evaluation rather than waiting for an app milestone.

Details that matter for this target

These are different clusters, not interchangeable difficulty levels. Dialect and language background can affect cluster realization. The single-consonant ages in the cited review do not provide a universal mastery age for all clusters. Do not invent a cluster age from an R or S milestone.

Using SpeechLP alongside the plan

Choose an exact blend available in the target list; do not enable every blend simply to cover a broad category. SpeechLP offers articulation games and target settings. Confirm that the selected game words fit the clinician's plan before beginning. Automatic feedback can disagree with a listener and is not a diagnostic result or proof of clinical improvement. Use the practice report to discuss what happened, including difficult words, with your SLP.

Printable activity sheet

[Download this printable guide](#), or print the word list and activity on separate pages. Leave out the child's name and any medical details. Circle the clinician-selected words and note the chosen position and activity level privately.

Related reading

- [SpeechLP for families](#)
- [AI articulation practice and its limits](#)
- [Find an SLP](#)
- [SpeechLP product facts](#)

Sources

- [Crowe and McLeod \(2020\), Children's English Consonant Acquisition in the United States](#). Acquisition bands describe a pooled 90% criterion, not mandatory individual treatment ages.
- [ASHA Practice Portal: Speech Sound Disorders](#). Individual assessment and linguistic variation.