

Clinically reviewed by Alissa Fox, M.S. CCC-SLP and Mari Gottlieb, M.A. CCC-SLP · 2026-10-10. Reviewers are SpeechLP co-founders.

R sound practice: choose the right kind of R

R is a family of contexts, not one interchangeable exercise. An SLP may select an initial R, a vowel-linked R, or a particular word before asking a caregiver to practice. Keep the assigned context intact rather than changing every activity to a harder R word.

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

Initial: rain, red, rabbit, rope

Medial: carrot, pirate, cereal, giraffe

Final: car, bear, chair, door

A picture detective game

Choose three pictures from the assigned R context. Hide one and describe it with the same short phrase each time. Let the child name the missing picture, then switch roles. A child who is practicing initial R could describe a red rabbit; a child assigned a vowel-linked context needs a different selection. The adult models the word and follows the SLP's feedback plan.

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

The U.S. English review places /r/ in the 5-year acquisition band at its 90% criterion. 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

Do not assume final R is a target for every speaker. Many English dialects use R differently after a vowel. Vocalic R categories can also vary by transcription and accent. Ask which examples match your family's variety of English.

Using SpeechLP alongside the plan

Ask whether the assigned target is initial R, a blend, or a vowel-linked R. These lists do not establish treatment order. 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.