

S sound practice: single S before clusters

An S practice list should separate a single S from an S cluster. Sun and sock begin with a single consonant; stop and snake begin with clusters and add a second planning demand. Use the level the clinician assigned rather than treating these words as equivalent.

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: sun, soap, sock, soup

Medial: messy, pencil, dinosaur, castle

Final: bus, house, mouse, ice

A pretend shop

Set out soap, a sock, and a picture of soup. Take turns being shopper and shopkeeper. Start with an assigned single word; use a short phrase such as "my sock" only when the SLP recommends that level. Keep the shop playful and stop if the child becomes uncomfortable. Castle has a silent written T, a useful reminder to organize by sound rather than spelling.

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 /s/ in the 4-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

A lisp is a descriptive term, not a diagnosis from a word list. A clinician can identify the production pattern and determine whether a cue, a different target, or an evaluation is appropriate. Do not use an app score to classify a lisp.

Using SpeechLP alongside the plan

Separate single S from S blends in the target settings. A score cannot determine a lisp subtype. 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.