

SH sound practice: words are more useful than spelling rules

SH /ʃ/ can be written SH, as in ship, or another way, as in ocean. A practice list should follow the spoken sound. Start with familiar vocabulary and the word position the clinician selected, then use those words in an activity with a real purpose.

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: shoe, sheep, ship, shell

Medial: ocean, washing, fishing, cushion

Final: fish, dish, brush, wish

A toy fishing trip

Make fish pictures or use existing toys. Each player catches a fish, names a chosen picture, and places it in a dish. If the assigned target is initial SH, replace final-SH words with a ship or shell activity. Keep the same sound position throughout the round and let the child choose how many turns feel manageable.

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 /j/ 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 child may produce a word differently in isolation and in a sentence. That does not mean a game is broken or a clinician's observation is wrong. Ask which level to practice and when to move on. Avoid repeated correction without the child's agreement.

Using SpeechLP alongside the plan

Check the spoken target in ocean or cushion instead of filtering only words with the letters SH. 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.