

What parents/family/friends can do to help a child with apraxia of speech:

- Engage the child in familiar rhymes or songs, by humming or using a favorite syllable (such as "dah")
- Have the child "fill-in-the-blanks" while reading familiar books or singing familiar songs.
- Help the child with best word approximations to ask for needs/desires, even if it is only the main vowel(s) of a word.
- While in play, encourage imitation of different consonants and vowel patterns.
- Help the child with word-retrieval through sign-language or gestures along with imitation.
- Reinforce verbal attempts with smiles, clapping, positive attention, and toys.
- Visit websites such as www.apraxia-kids.org or www.apraxia.cc to learn more about apraxia of speech.

What can be done at home, in the natural environment?

The most important goal at home is "functional" speech and thus, "functional" language. Most likely everything up until now (assuming this is a preschooler), has been anticipated for the child. This must change in that the child's needs and desires must not be met until they are asked to tell you what is needed or desired. It is important to note that you will be completely helping the child to produce his/her **best** word approximations with maximal imitations *and* cues initially. You will then gradually fade the cues. The phrases to teach are:

I want _____.

Let me _____.

My turn.

Help me.

Put on _____.

Take off _____.

Pick up.

Put down.

Turn on _____.

Turn off _____.

Open _____.

More _____.

"I want" might have to be "ah wah," or "my turn" might have to be "mah tuh." The point is, the child must learn that they will **not** achieve any desired effects around the house, unless they perform their best attempts at producing words. You may have to change things around the house so that they aren't as accessible as they were. Most kids can open doors and cupboards independently. You might want to put locks on things, or place things out of reach. It is the hope that if the child realizes the routine, they will "talk" on their own without waiting until you tell them or cue them. Functional attempts at home should be assisted in a playful, matter-of-fact manner (not negative or punitive). Once they have a baseline of many useful words and phrases, they will better understand the power of speaking and will probably attempt more and more "functional" language. The speech pathologist can continue to help to refine, and integrate speech and language skills.