

# Toss the Sippy Cup for Optimal Speech Development

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(Summarized from sources below)



The type of cup your young child drinks from can have a big impact on the development and function of their lips, teeth, tongue, and jaw—and ultimately their speech.

Speech-language pathologists often see children with developmental delays who are drinking from bottles or sippy cups instead of open cups way beyond an age that is recommended. This may be because the parents or the child have difficulty with change. It may seem silly to change something that seems to be working.

But we know that transitioning from bottle to cup (and especially the *right* cup) is an important developmental step for feeding and for supporting the development of speech. Continuing to drink from a bottle or a sippy cup can have a long-term negative impact on a child's speech development and the health of their teeth.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children transition from a bottle to a cup by 12 months and completely eliminate bottle drinking by 18 months of age. This is to ensure they transition from an immature to mature swallow pattern.

Without getting too technical, a more mature swallow pattern is important for having the tongue stabilize and rest in the best position in the mouth, and allows the tip

of the tongue to move and lift easily to contact the bumpy ridge on the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. The tongue needs to be fully inside the mouth at rest and for all speech sounds. Tongue tip elevation requires the mid-tongue be stable within the mouth in order to move independently for letter sounds such as *t*, *d* and *n*.


The longer a child continues an immature sucking/swallowing pattern the more likely they may develop speech sound errors.

## SOME TIPS:

- Balance cups with retractable straws with open cups as often as possible.
- It is important that children only use their lips to draw up the liquid and not their tongues. If your child's tongue is under the straw and thrusting forward with a suckling-like movement, cut the straw to a shorter length or eliminate straw drinking completely.
- Don't be surprised if you get a little resistance when changing up your child's cup. Be patient, set clear expectations, and know your child will benefit in the long run by transitioning to better drinking options.

Here are a few additional resources, and don't hesitate to contact your KCC speech-language pathologist for guidance.

- <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/step-away-from-the-sippy-cup/full/>
- <https://speechsisters.com/bottle-to-cup/>
- <https://pediatricboulevard.com/a-speech-therapists-guide-to-sippy-cups/>



### BEST CUPS

With straws or recessed lids, or open without lids

### WORST CUPS

- With bottle-like nipples for kids past 12 months
- With hard, firm spouts

