



## How to make the 's' sound

The 's' sound is made by placing your tongue on the ridge just behind your top teeth, putting your teeth together and gently pushing air through your teeth. Your mouth should be in 'smiley' face shape.

The 's' sound is called a long sound or a 'fricative' as it involved creating friction in your mouth by blowing gently to make the sound.

Some children and young people find making 's' sounds challenging:

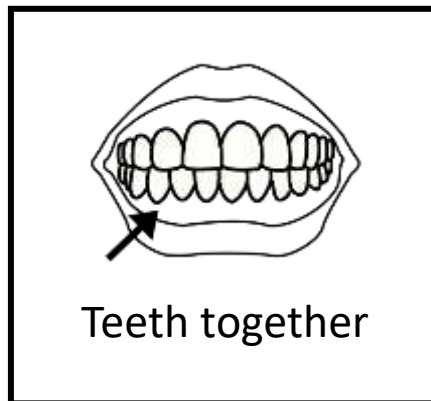
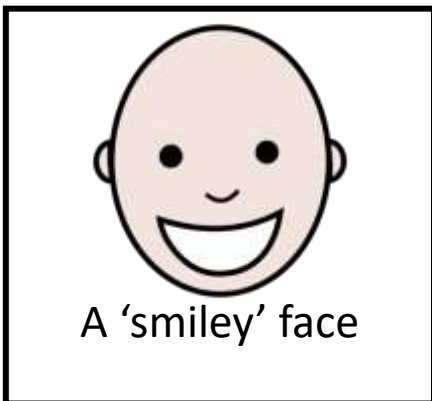
- The 's' sound may be changed for another sound, e.g. 'sun' is said as 'dun', 'sock' is said as 'tock' or 'sad' is said as 'fad'.
- Sometimes, the tongue may appear through the teeth making a 'th' sound instead of an 's', e.g. 'sun' is said as 'thun' – this is called lipping or using an interdental 's'.
- Sometimes the 's' sound can sound as if there is a lot of saliva when it is being produced – this is often caused by a lateral production of an 's' sound – this means that the tongue position is not accurate and air escapes from the wrong place, causing the 's' to sound different.



## Steps to make the 's' sound:

First have a try at making the sound yourself. Notice where your tongue is, what shape your mouth is in and what you do.

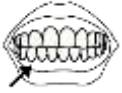
To make an 's' sound you need:



You should not be able to see your tongue. Once you have these mouth shapes in place, gently push air out of your mouth, between your teeth. You should hear a 'sssss' like a snake hissing.

Explain each step to your child or young person – sometimes using a mirror to see mouth shapes is helpful. It is also useful to have a picture symbol for younger children to use when practising making this sound. A picture symbol will act as a prompt when moving on to practising using the sound in words and sentences – a snake picture is often used to represent the 's' sound. There are published phonics resources available with picture symbols that your

child's educational setting or speech and language therapist will be able to guide you to use as a resource when working on this sound. You could also use the symbol at the bottom of the page.



**A note about teeth:**

Sometimes, a child may have lost their front teeth and a gap is present until their adult teeth grow into place. This may make it more challenging to work on this sound as you are unable to use the front teeth as a barrier. You can still ask the child to feel for the bumpy ridge behind their front teeth and ask them to 'stick' their tongue to this spot in their mouth when trying this sound.



**Alternative ways to make 's':**

Sometimes, when a child or young person is changing their 's' sound to a short sound such as 't' or 'd', using just the above methods does not help with producing a 's' sound. 'S' sounds are made by placing your tongue in a similar place as the 't' and 'd' sounds. Encourage your child to make a 't' sound to feel where the tongue should be. See if they can keep their tongue stuck to the spot. Encourage them to gently push air out of their mouth to make a 'tsssss' – this sound is like a steam engine letting off steam.

**Symbol for the 's' sound:**

