

# Oral Placement Therapy Tools and Techniques...Explained

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*There are many pieces to an oral placement program. Below are "some" of the most frequently used techniques; with babies, children, and adults with Down syndrome. (For the purposes of this article the term "children" will be used) All of these are techniques that I have learned personally from Sara Rosenfeld Johnson and her company "Talk Tools". Most of these techniques are used in combination; depending on your child's needs. Below are descriptions of each technique and how they affect feeding and speech development.*

## **Therapeutic Facial/Oral Massage**

Facial and oral cavity massage is very important to our children. Due to the decreased sensitivity found in people with low tone, more tactile input is necessary to create more normalized sensation in and around a child's mouth. There are simple pre-feeding massage techniques used on a child's cheeks, lips, face and tongue that parents can do to help their child achieve more normalized oral sensation for feeding and speech. This is important during feeding so that a child can localize where a bolus/mass of food is inside his mouth at all times. Speech benefit: When a child has awareness and feeling in their articulators (parts of their mouth), then their muscles have better "control" of how they move for the placement of speech sounds. (motor-planning excluded)

## **Tongue Tip Lateralization**

The movement of the tongue side to side inside the mouth is important for good feeding and speech. Tools such as a: toothbrush, Nuk brush, Z-vibe and Ark probe can be used to establish tongue tip lateralization. Other feeding strategies such as a Slow-feed and Cubed-feed (where food is placed on the back molars) can increase tongue tip lateralization as long as the jaw is stabilized during the activity. Speech benefits: When your tongue is able to lateralize to the back molars, then it will be able to elevate for the purposes of

producing many of our speech sounds such as: / t, d, n, l, s, z/.

<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.863/.f> - ARK'S Z-Vibe Travel Kit

## **Chewy Tubes**

Red, yellow, green and purple chewy tubes/ark grabbers are used to increase jaw strength and grading for the purposes of chewing a variety of foods properly (tongue lateralization is also necessary). Speech benefits: The chewy tubes provide increased strength, grading and a motor plan for supporting speech sound development. Chewy tubes can also be used as a sensory tool when a child needs TMJ stimulation (teeth grinding etc).

<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.1374/.f> - Bite Tube Set 4 Pack

## **Jaw Grading Bite Blocks (JGBB)**

JGBB are tools used to strengthen your child's jaw in the seven grades necessary to produce the English phonetic inventory at the conversational speech level. These tools help your child sustain the endurance necessary to speak in longer lengths of utterances with good speech clarity and jaw symmetry. These are an extremely important part of an Oral Placement Program. The JGBB are often used in conjunction with the Slow-feed and the Gum Chewing Hierarchy.

<http://www.talktools.com/bite-block-jaw-grading-red/> - Jaw Grading Bite Blocks (Red)

## **Therapeutic Horn Blowing**

The therapeutic horn hierarchy is used for tongue retraction and strengthening, lip approximation/ protrusion and strengthening, and most of all for increasing abdominal grading. Speech benefits: The horn hierarchy is used to increase the duration of airflow a child can access for speaking in long utterances. Some of our children often have "whisper-like" voice quality due to low tone and poor abdominal grading. Horns help our children

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speak louder and last longer when talking to us.  
<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.895/.f> - Original Horn Kit

## **Therapeutic Spoon Feeding**

There are many methods of therapeutic spoon feeding to help A) tongue retraction, B) lip closure, C) closed oral resting posture. The rapid repetitive spoon (side) feed method is a technique used with babies and young children in order to create lip closure on the side of a spoon, as well as tongue retraction between the bites (this helps the food to be swallowed). Speech benefit: This method creates lip approximation and independent movement of the lips (from the jaw) for the purposes of creating a /p, b, m/ sound.

<http://www.talktools.com/maroon-spoon-small-set-of-5/> - Maroon Spoon (Set of 5)

## **Therapeutic Straw Drinking**

Straw drinking is an appropriate way of drinking (as well as cup drinking). Therapeutic straw drinking is used to help with tongue retraction/strengthening, cheek tension/mobility and lip puckering. This program is recommended to children with tongue protrusion, low tone/weakness and decreased lip pucker. Speech benefit: This program aids in speech clarity (for sounds created by the tongue), and lip movement for sounds such as: /o, u, w, sh, er/. An easy way to teach straw drinking is with a "Honey Bear". It enables parents to squeeze a liquid into the child's mouth through a straw.  
<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.771/.f?sc=23&category=1334> - Honey Bear

<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.911/.f> - Straw Kit

## **Cup Drinking**

Many of our children need assistance when learning to drink from a cup. A Cut- Out- Cup is often used to teach a child to learn how to drink from a cup. "These flexible cups stimulate the corners of the mouth to facilitate lip closure and allow a child to drink without

head or neck extension." (Talk Tools TM)  
Speech benefits: Lip closure around the cup can be translated to lip closure for the /m/ sound. Tongue retraction while drinking can be translated to tongue retraction during speech sounds /p, b, m/.

<http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.174/.f> - Pink Cut-Out-Cup

*Most people are amazed at how many techniques compose an oral placement therapy program. Although the above may seem like a lot, an oral placement program involving these techniques and tools can prove to be very effective, and can be done very quickly each day, when made a part of your daily routine. There can be other parts to an oral placement program, however the above listed techniques and tools are most frequently used and asked about by parents. As always, please consult with a speech pathologist for an Oral Placement Evaluation before purchasing and/or using any of these tools.*

**Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC**

**Speech Language Pathologist - TalkTools Level 4 - Specific to Down syndrome**

**CA: 17173**

[heather@happykidstherapy.com](mailto:heather@happykidstherapy.com)

[www.happykidstherapy.com](http://www.happykidstherapy.com)