

Cued Speech: Getting Started

By Sarina Roffé

Over the years I've taught many people Cued Speech and I've always found that when people leave class, or cue camp or wherever they have learned cueing, that they need several things to get started using CS successfully. I've seen people fail miserably, mostly because they don't use it; and I've seen families be tremendously successful.

So what are the keys? Why are some people more successful at becoming fluent cuers than others become? Why does Cueing come more easily for some than for others? And what does it mean to use CS successfully? And how does fluent cueing transfer into the development of good English language skills for deaf children? How do parents make that happen? So let's take these questions one at a time.

Becoming a Fluent Cuer

Well the key to becoming a fluent cuer is to learn cueing so that it becomes automatic, like knowing that two plus two is four.

Why does it come easier for some than for others? I'm not sure that it does. I've heard people argue that it's easier for people who know phonics, such as speech teachers. I've people say that they didn't learn to read with phonics, so it's harder for them. Well, I am here to tell you that I didn't either. When I learned to read in New York City schools, I learned with the Dick and Jane series; no phonics, and people think I'm a fairly good cuer.

I think the keys that open the door to successful cueing have to do with motivation – how badly you want to learn it – and ***practice, practice, practice***. If you don't memorize the system and know your vowels as easily as you know your name, then it won't be easy and you will always struggle.

I like to think of learning to cue as an investment that will pay dividends for many years to come, dividends that benefit both my child and me. Before I learned to cue, I saw parents of older children spend their time after school, re-teaching their deaf children their schoolwork. These were committed parents, but I couldn't see doing that for the rest of my life.

When I was learning to cue, I knew that my learning to cue would make the difference in whether or not every day of my child's future would be a challenge. So I committed myself to cueing so well that it became as automatic as my knowing my name. I believed as clearly then as I do now, that cueing would change our lives.

Common Sense Tips for Getting Started

Goal: To gain fluency with cueing.

- Rule # 1: Be committed to cueing. If you are not committed, if you don't believe in cueing, then you will lose the battle.
- Rule # 2: Start slow: 10 – 15 minutes 2-3 times a day in the first week or two, then 30 minutes, and longer and longer until you are cueing all the time.
- Rule # 3: Memorize the vowels – drill them until you know them and can hear them.
- Rule # 4: Use idle time for practice – the waiting room of a doctor's office, sitting on the bus or subway, waiting in your car at a red light.

- Rule # 5: Practice things you know first – nursery rhymes, songs, and television commercials
- Rule # 6: Start with known vocabulary – yes, no, body parts, the alphabet, numbers, colors, names of objects
- Rule # 7: Cue every day - don't wait until you are fluent. You won't be fluent if you don't practice everyday.
- Rule # 8: Be consistent: Don't skip a day, because if you do, you'll fall down.
- Rule # 9: Cue slowly. Don't worry about being slow. Your child will be slow at first also.
- Rule #10: Repeat what your child says by cueing it back to him or her.

Sarina's Tip: Remember children learn through repetition.

The Obvious

1. Keep objects away from your mouth when cueing.
2. Keep your hands away from your cheek when talking.
3. Keep facial hair trimmed and neat.
4. Wait for eye contact before you talk and cue.
5. Never cue without using your mouth.
6. Remember to synchronize your cues with your mouth movements.

Using Cued Speech with Your Child

Goal: To enrich vocabulary as a baseline for communication and literacy.

1. Wait for eye contact before you cue; even if it's brief.
2. Be consistent: Cue the same things over and over again.
3. Start with known vocabulary – names of members of your family and words and phrases your child maybe familiar with – and then build on the same vocabulary.
4. Use complete sentences -
 - It's time for your bath.
 - It's time to get dressed.
 - It's time to eat.
 - It's time for breakfast.
 - It's time for dinner.
 - It's time for a snack.
 - Do you want cereal?
 - Do you want Rice Krispies?
 - Do you want Corn Flakes?
 - Do you want Cap'n Crunch cereal?
5. Cue sounds in the environment, especially with cochlear implant children because it validates what they hear.
6. As language builds, expect expressive speech, especially with questions. For example:
 - Q: What do you want for breakfast?
 - A: I don't know.
 - Q: Do you want cereal?
 - A: Yes
 - Q: What kind of cereal do you want?
 - A: I want Rice Krispies.
7. Don't accept pointing or gestures when a child is demanding something. Give him or her the words to express himself. If the child points to a cookie, and you know he wants the cookie, then hold the

cookie and say “Do you want a cookie?” If the child indicates in the affirmative, then say, “You need to ask for it. Say ‘please may I have a cookie?’” Use and expect language and you will get language. Cue all the time and be consistent in your expectations.

8. Remember: Language is **what** you say. Speech is **how** you say it. With cues you are building language. You can use cues to clarify and correct speech, but not to teach speech.
9. Avoid baby language. A pacifier is a pacifier, not a ba-ba or a bo-bo or a paci.
10. Use every opportunity to talk to your child and build on that vocabulary.
- 11. Think of your home as a laboratory of learning and use it.**
- 12. Make learning language a game. It should be fun.**

Sarina’s Tip: Don’t Dumb Down Your Language.

Building Basic Language

We know that hearing children learn language effortlessly through listening, eavesdropping, exposure and interaction. Children are naturally curious and when we build language we need to build on that curiosity. As parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, we can build vocabulary by providing a model for language structure, through daily routine and the vocabulary used in those routines.

1. **Cue babble or whatever your child says – cueing it back reinforces what they are saying and tells them that you understood them.**
2. Remember to cue colors – not just red, blue and yellow, but magenta, purple, lavender and turquoise.
3. Cue body parts
4. Animals – farm and zoo animals
5. Count objects and use numbers
6. Use the names of the shapes of objects – triangles, squares, polygons, ovals
7. Sing and cue the alphabet.
8. Use prepositions and opposites – on, off, under, over, near, far, next to, in, out, etc.
9. Use adjectives – the dog’s tail is bushy, thin, thick, long, short. A pattern is plaid, or striped or solid colored. He is wearing a flowery shirt.
10. Talk about how things smell and their texture – soft, hard, sandy, rough, smooth
11. Use brand names – Nike sneakers, Calvin Klein.
12. Use names of toys – Buzz Light year; C3PO
13. Sing nursery rhymes with your child.
14. Talk about how things are the same or different
15. Talk about emotions and how things feel. If your child is angry or sad or happy, give him or her the words to say it.
16. Capitalize on your child’s interests.

Sarina’s tip: Listen to hearing children talk among themselves. Listen for phrases you wouldn’t normally say and work them into the vocabulary you use with your child.

Ideas for activities with your preschool child

1. *Cooking simple things.*
 Pudding is a great thing to make because it’s easy and there’s lots of language. Pouring, mixing, shaking, pouring. Talk about how thin the milk is, how powdery the pudding mix is and the thickness of the pudding after it’s made.
2. *Make a shopping list with your child.*

- Do we need apples? We need three apples.
- Do we need cereal? What kind of cereal do we need?
- We need four oranges.

After you make the list. Take your child to the supermarket with the specific person of purchasing what's on the list and only what's on the list. Avoid the temptation of buying other items the first time you do this exercise.

3. *Language Experience books*

This idea went out in the 90s but I think experience books are great for preschool kids. The concept is simple. You take an activity you have done with the child, such as going to McDonald's, and break it down into small steps in sequential order. For example:

- Mommy, Daddy and Johnny got in the car
- We drove to McDonald's.
- Johnny ordered a hamburger and French fries and a soda.
- Johnny ate lunch.
- The three of us went home.

Here we have a sequence of five actions. To make the activity book, you can draw one item on a page and put the description, only a sentence, on the page. A child is always more interested in a book that involves himself.

4. *Read often and cue*

- Always cue when you read to your child.
- Choose books of your child's language level or slightly higher.
- If you can't cue the whole thing, then cue parts of each page, but remember to cue, cue, cue.

5. *Take walk in the neighborhood or in a park*

- Take walks in the neighborhood with your child and point out things.
- Name the plants, trees and flowers.
- Talk about different cars people have.
- See how many colors you can find.
- Talk about or name unusual objects you might take for granted – the fire hydrant, the sewer cover, a parking meter. Talk about what they are used for.

6. *Talk about the child's interests.*

- If your child likes cars, then talk about cars - their colors, types, and the parts of a car.
- If your child likes dolls, talk about the parts of the doll, the clothing she wears.
- If your child likes to build, talk about the names of tools and what they are used for.

7. *Take field trips*

- Go to the zoo and talk about the zoo animals. What's the difference between an Asian elephant and an African elephant? A giraffe has a long neck. A kangaroo hops and holds a baby in its pouch.
- Go to a farm and talk about farm animals. Talk about their eating habits and what the animals produce, like milk. Chickens have feathers and make eggs; cows have fur.
- Go to an aquarium and talk about the fish, dolphins and other sea life.
- Go to the beach or lake. Build castles in the sand and how wet sand is easier to work with when building. Talk about how the waves come and go and wash away the castles at night.

8. *Reinforce body parts at bath time*

- Wash your ears.
- Wash your arms.
- Wash your legs.

- Wash your hands.
9. *Ask questions and expect answers*
- What's your name?
 - How old are you?
 - Where do you live?
 - Where is your jacket?
10. *Familiarize your child with animal sounds.*
- The cow goes moo.
 - The pig goes oink.
 - The sheep goes baaa.
 - A horse goes neigh.
 - A duck says quack quack.

Building Advanced Language

- Use idiomatic expressions
- Use expressions from a non-English language.
- Teach your child to answer riddles.
- Play charades.