

# Foundational Oral Movements for Treating the /R/ Sound



**LAURA POWELL M.S., CCC-SLP, COM  
THERAPY UNLIMITED, LLC  
COLUMBIA, MO**

## Oral Movements for /R/



- Distortion of the /r/ is the result of absent, problematic or poorly-timed movements of:

- Jaw
- Lip
- Tongue

- Bottom Line: Oral Proprioception

## Oral Proprioception



- **Proprioception Defined:** The ability to sense stimuli within the body regarding position, motion, and equilibrium ([www.Medicinenet.com](http://www.Medicinenet.com))
- Apply to oral space...if a person does not have the ability to “tell” their oral structures what to do and where to go, they will not be able to have correct place and manner for targeted sounds, including /r/

## Jaw



- **Identify Patient’s Jaw Position at Rest**
  - Help them to realize healthy neutral position
    - ✦ Jaw slightly low
    - ✦ Upper and lower molars are near one another, but not touching
- **Evaluate Jaw Movement for /r/ Attempts**
  - Is the jaw too high or low?
  - Is the jaw stabilizing to accommodate tongue position for /r/?
  - Is the jaw protruding/retracting or lateralizing?
  - Are the movements too gross?
- **Jaw to compensate for poor production and control**

## Carrie's Turn--Jaw



- Mirror, please!!
  
- Lingual-mandibular Differentiation
  - Vertical
  - Horizontal
  - Lateral

## Tongue



- Position
  - Tip-up
    - ✦ Sweeping up and back of the tongue tip so that it curls and approaches but does not touch the velum
      - Easy visibility
      - May be able to transition from tip-up to back-up
  - Back-up
    - ✦ Stabilizing the tongue at its back-lateral margins while the middle back tenses forward into a slightly high position that is lower than the sides, and the lips protruding
      - Hard to describe
      - Hard to visualize
      - More natural for rapid conversational speech

## Carrie's Turn--Tip-up



- **Tap into Position**
  - Start with “lah” on alveolar ridge
  - Repeat sound as you move your tongue along your palate
  - When your tongue reaches the palatal notch sound should sound like “rah”
  - Don't tell the client to say /r/
- **Slide into Position**
  - /l/ to /r/--say /l/ and prolong while moving tongue along palate
    - ✦ If tension is good throughout movement, an /r/ should emerge
  - /z/ to /r/--say /z/ and prolong while moving tongue along palate
    - ✦ If tension is good throughout movement, an /r/ should emerge

## Carrie's Turn-Back-up



- **Butterfly Position:**
  - Bite
    - ✦ Expand tongue bowl by instructing client to place edges of tongue bowl along upper molars
  - Push
    - ✦ Instruct client to push both sides simultaneously then to open jaw slightly
  - Slide
    - ✦ Instruct client to maintain position but to pull tongue back slightly toward oropharynx
  - Voice
    - ✦ Intermittently add voice
    - ✦ We are teaching /r/ position, not the /r/ sound

## Lips



- Identify lip movement for /r/ attempts
  - Are they rounding, retracting or separating?
  - Are lips coordinated with tongue and jaw movements?
- Lips are like the icing on the cake
  - Lip position helps the acoustic quality of /r/ to snap into position

## Carrie's Turn--Lips



- Patient Awareness:
  - Produce /r/ in isolation...
  - Prolong the /r/ production and pucker the lips slightly
  - Repeat the task but pucker firmly so that the lips are almost touching
  - Repeat and retract the lips
  - What happens to your /r/??

## Incorrect Jaw and Lip Position



- Get lips out of the way
- Jaw should not be open for production
  - /or/ attempts