

## Oral Muscle Development Training: Laying the Foundation for Language Skills

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Every child's language ability is different. Some children can speak various words by the age of one and form sentences by two, communicating effectively with others. However, some children develop their language skills more slowly. In fact, the development of oral muscles has a profound impact on both eating and language abilities. Parents can engage in various small games to train their children's oral muscles, laying a solid foundation for their language development.

Oral muscles include the muscles of the cheeks, lips, tongue, and jaw, which develop and improve with age and eating experiences. The strength, control, flexibility, and coordination of these muscles are crucial factors in a child's ability to learn to speak.

Daily meal times provide excellent practice opportunities. However, some cases involve children primarily eating finely chopped or pureed foods, which can hinder the normal development of their chewing abilities, affecting both eating and language development. Common issues include drooling and unclear or inaccurate pronunciation, so oral muscle problems must be addressed.

Here are some simple games to train oral muscles, which we hope will improve children's oral capabilities through fun activities, thus laying a strong foundation for their language skills.

### **Blowing Practice**

### How to Play:

First, prepare a basin of water and position it between the parent and child, who should face each other. Fill the basin halfway with water and place a paper boat on the parent's side, adding a small treat or toy (such as stickers, etc.) inside. The parent blows the paper boat toward the child, who can then take the treat. If the child wants more, they must blow the boat back toward the parent.

This blowing exercise strengthens the ability to retract the tongue and round the lips, enhancing the stability and control of the jaw, which improves speech clarity.



### Chewing Practice

#### How to Play:

Cut harder vegetables or fruits (such as carrots, cucumbers, celery, and apples) into strips approximately the length and thickness of a finger. The parent holds the end of the vegetable strip and places it between the child's molars to encourage chewing. The parent should stabilize the food's position, pushing it slightly each time the child bites until the strip is completely eaten, alternating sides for practice. Parents can adjust the size, length, and hardness of the food strips according to the child's abilities.

Chewing requires the coordination of the lips, tongue, and jaw muscles, while speech development also relies on the collaboration of different oral muscles to produce various sounds. Therefore, chewing training helps improve clarity of pronunciation.

