Phonological Processes Chart & Age Norms Guide

This guide summarizes common phonological processes, examples, and typical ages of elimination. Use this reference when assessing, writing IEP goals, or explaining developmental norms to teachers and families. Persistent or atypical processes may indicate a phonological disorder.

Category	Process	Example	Typical Mastery*
Syllable-Structure	Final consonant deletion	*"ba"* for *"ball"*	~3 yrs
Syllable-Structure	Weak syllable deletion	*"efant"* for *"elephant"*	~4 yrs
Syllable-Structure	Cluster reduction	*"cool"* for *"school"*	~4 yrs
Substitution	Stopping	*"ton"* for *"sun"*	~3 yrs 6 mo
Substitution	Gliding	*"wed"* for *"red"*	~7 yrs
Substitution	Fronting	*"doat"* for *"goat"*	~4 yrs
Substitution/Structure	Backing	*"guppy"* for *"puppy"*	~3 yrs
Assimilation	Consonant harmony	*"tat"* for *"cat"*	~3 yrs

Notes for SLPs:

• Expect most phonological processes to resolve by age 4.
• Gliding and cluster reduction may persist slightly longer.
• Backing, initial consonant deletion, and other atypical patterns are red flags for referral.
• Always consider linguistic and dialectal differences when evaluating bilingual students.

Red Flags for School-Based SLPs:

- Persistence of Developmental Processes Beyond Age Norms
- Presence of Atypical Processes (e.g., Initial consonant deletion, Backing)
- Low Speech Intelligibility
- Limited Phonetic Inventory and Inconsistent Errors