40 Effective Exercises
and Activities for Tongue Thrust

Exercises for the tongue

1. **Lift tongue to “the spot”** - this is the bumpy spot behind the upper front teeth (tongue elevation with mouth open). Use a Cheerio or an orthodontic elastic at first to find “the spot”, then find “the spot” without it, if you can.

2. **Tongue pops** – suction tongue to the roof of your mouth, smile, then pop. Don’t move your jaw. Use a bite block (like 4 Popsicle sticks taped together) to help keep the jaw still.

3. **Tongue suck** or **sticky tongue** - raise your tongue to the roof of your mouth, hold it there with pressure (sucking) for 5 seconds, then release with a pop.

4. **Tongue drag** – suction whole tongue up to roof of your mouth, and drag it back.

5. **La La songs** - sing a familiar song, like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star but use "La" for all the lyrics (make sure the tongue stays behind the teeth).

6. **T, D N and L word lists** - the tongue raises up to “the spot”.

7. **K and G word lists** - the tongue moves back.

8. **Lizard tongue** - point tongue out of the mouth and down - stretches the lingual frenulum.

9. **Tongue pushups** – hold a tongue depressor straight up and down in front of your mouth. Reach out your tongue and press against the tongue depressor, pushing the tongue depressor toward your tongue (isometric exercise). Hold 5 seconds. Don’t move your jaw forward.

10. **Point and extend** – Point your tongue straight out. Holding your tongue out there, make the tongue tip do a “sit up”. Keep your tongue extended and only the tip lifts up a little.

11. **Full curl** – Stick out your tongue and curl the whole tongue up toward your nose, then curl the whole tongue down toward your chin.

12. **Waggle tongue** - move tongue side to side, touching inside corner of your lips.

13. **Molar tap** - reach the tongue tip back and "tap" each molar in succession - lower left, upper left, upper right and lower right, and go again.
14. **Tooth cleaners** – use the tongue to “rub” the back molars, several times, upper and lower.

15. **ABC trace** - pretend the tongue tip is a pencil and "trace" the alphabet on the roof of your mouth.

16. **Peanut butter scrape** - imagine you have peanut butter on the roof of your mouth. Use your tongue tip to scrape it off. Put your tongue tip to "the spot" and lick, pushing the tongue up and back.

17. **Lip lickers** – Lick around your lips firmly, as if you are trying to lick off something sticky.

18. **Slurp apple sauce or fruit puree** – Slurping fruit puree off a spoon moves the tongue blade back.

19. **K swallow** - I like to use a chopstick for this. Take a chopstick in your mouth and bite down with the left and right teeth. Place your tongue **on top** of the chopstick. Say "kah - kah - kah", then practice a swallow. You can use water (a spray bottle is good) or no water. The tongue must move up and back for the swallow (since the chopstick prevents it from "fronting"). This can also be done when lying down on your back. Then gravity helps too!

20. **Mint swallow** – put a sugarless mint on your tongue tip, lift it to "the spot". Hold it there. Close your mouth. As the mint dissolves, swallow without taking your tongue tip off of "the spot".

21. **Tongue in “resting position”** - put your tongue tip to “the spot”. Raise your whole tongue up high against the roof of your mouth, teeth closed, lips closed, breathe through your nose. Hold for 5 minutes, working up to 30 minutes at a time. Do another activity along with “resting position” - play a game, read a book, etc. to avoid boredom. Check your position and correct as needed.

22. **Tongue trace** - with lips closed, lick the inside of the lips around in a circle. Don’t open your lips.

23. **Sip swallow** – sip a small amount of water and “trap” it on your tongue. Lift your tongue up. All the water should be held against the roof of your mouth (no leaking). Without moving your tongue forward, swallow. The water should go up and back, then down for the swallow.

24. **Water pump or water swishy** - with a small amount of water, swish the water around in your mouth, like mouthwash, for 1 minute, then gather it all on top of your tongue, and “trap” it on the top of your tongue. Lift your tongue up and swallow using the “sip swallow” above.
25. **Straws for liquids** - 1. use “oo” lips. 2. place straw in front of teeth 3. remove straw after each sip, so liquid drains from the straw and you must begin again. Finish with the “sip swallow” above. Fat straws are easiest. Skinny straws are hardest.

**Exercises for lips**

1. **Fish face pops** - make a kissing sound
2. **OO-EE** or **pucker-smile** - helps to round the lips. Then read a list of words with W and OO to support lip rounding.
3. **Button pull** - two buttons on a floss loop, one is held between the closed lips and closed teeth. Pull the other at the center of the mouth gently for 25 seconds. Start at a button that is 7/8” and move down as able, ¾ “, 5/8 “, 1/2 “ and 3/8” (Talk Tools® exercise.) Only do this exercise if you can handle a button in your mouth and are not in danger of swallowing it. Adults: You should use health precautions! If you are handling the button that goes in the child’s mouth, use a glove for your safety and his. (Talk Tools® recommends floss, but it’s not very durable. String or thin kitchen twine lasts longer, and the whole thing can go into the washer in a zippered lingerie bag, for cleaning.)
4. **Tongue depressor with pennies** – tape pennies to both ends of a tongue depressor. Using lips only, hold the center of the tongue depressor for 25 seconds, x3. Start with 2 pennies and work up to 16 (Talk Tools® exercise.)

**Exercises for jaws**

1. **OO-EE-AH** - say EE-OO-AH for practice lowering the jaw for these sounds (EE lowers a little, OO lowers more, AH lowers the most (Talk Tools® exercise.) Practice builds the *muscle memory* for the position of the jaw.
2. **Chewy tubes** - jaw strength can be improved by biting on a chewy tube (designed especially for this). Tubes come in different levels of firmness. I like the red tubes from Talk Tools®. Chewy tubes are good if you can’t chew gum because of dental appliances.
3. **Gum-chewing** - strengthens jaws, lips and tongue. You can use gum-chewing for strengthening the masseter muscle, which moves the jaw. For asymmetrical weakness, chew more on the weak side. (Avoid gum if you have TMJ problems.) Keep the gum on the back molars. Keep the lips closed. Breathe through your
nose. Start at 5 minutes and work up to 30 minutes. Gum should always be disposed of properly (wrapped in paper, and thrown in the trash can).

4. **Watch the muscle** – with a mirror, bite down and watch the masseter muscle move or bulge (the muscle on the side of your face connecting jaw to skull). Bite 5 times and then rest. You can also place hands on the sides of jaw to feel the muscle.

**Extra Activities**

1. **Frenulum stretch** – with gloved hand adult pushes on the lingual frenulum to stretch it manually. Stoke from base up counting to 5. You can do this on yourself also.

2. **Tongue massage** – suction tongue up and open a close, stretching your tongue. Put your hands below your ears and your thumbs under your tongue, and massage the bottom of your tongue with your thumbs, on sides and center (the lingual frenulum).

3. **Bubble blowing and horn blowing** – works on abdominal grading, phonation and cheek control.

4. **Balloons** – targets lip strength, abdominal grading and phonation. Stretch out balloons first so they are easier to blow up.

5. **Paper suck Tic Tac Toe, or Bingo** – use a dry straw to “lift” and place paper pieces for the game.

6. **Air hockey with ping pong ball** – use breath (no hands) to move and control the ball, for abdominal grading and controlled airflow.

7. **Crunchy foods** – try adding crunchy foods to your diet. Crunchy foods work the jaw and tongue muscles. Add one food at a time for a week, or as you can tolerate - raw carrots, celery, cookies, hard crackers, pretzels, cheese doodles, potato chips, breadsticks, bagel chips or dry cereal.