

WordBuds

Frequently Asked Questions

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End User FAQs

1. How do I share my child's profile with another parent?

Open the Settings page, click to the “Share Child” button, and enter the email address of the other account you want to share with. After you confirm, that user will see a popup the next time they open the app, asking whether they want to accept or decline access to your child. Once they accept, both of you can log words for the same child, and your data stays synchronized in real time.

2. Why am I being asked to complete a survey before I can add my child?

WordBuds is part of an active research study, and the demographic survey collects information that researchers need to interpret the data. This step is required by the study's protocol, and you only need to complete it once per account. After it is finished, you can add children, log words, and use every other feature of the app.

3. Why is the page mostly blank when I open the admin/researcher portal?

This is a known bug we hope to address soon. For now, there is a simple fix: click the refresh button on your browser, and the portal should work fully as intended.

4. Can I edit or delete a word after I have already logged it?

Yes. From the Word Log page, you can tap any entry to view its details, change the date of first utterance, attach a video, change the part of speech, or add notes. Additionally there is an option to delete a word if you did not mean to create that entry whatsoever.

Component Services: APIs, OAuth, and Setup

1. What external services does WordBuds depend on?

WordBuds is built on top of several Firebase services. Firebase Authentication handles user sign-up and login using email and password credentials. Cloud Firestore is the real-time database that stores all child profiles, word logs, and sharing relationships between parents. Firebase Cloud Functions run server-side logic such as processing child-share requests, accepting or declining those requests, and assigning custom user roles. All of these services are configured through the Firebase console, and a Firebase project must be set up before the app can run for the first time.

2. How does authentication work, and is OAuth involved?

The app uses Firebase Authentication with email and password sign-up for end users. Firebase handles all token management and secure credential storage automatically, so the app code does not deal with raw passwords or auth tokens. OAuth is not used for end-user login at this time. Developers, on the other hand, do interact with OAuth indirectly: running firebase login on the command line authenticates the developer through Google's OAuth flow, which is required before they can deploy Cloud Functions or update Firestore security rules.

3. Are there any API keys or credentials I need to manage?

Yes. The Firebase project configuration, which includes the API key, project ID, and auth domain, must be included in the app's environment or configuration file. These values are not secret in the traditional sense, since Firebase relies on Firestore security rules and Authentication checks rather than the API key itself to control access. Even so, it is still good practice to keep them out of public repositories. The Firebase CLI also requires an active logged-in session before you can deploy functions or push security rule changes.

Installation Gotchas

1. Why are my Cloud Functions not deploying?

The first time you try to deploy Cloud Functions, the deploy will fail with the error message "Couldn't find firebase-functions package in your source code." This happens because the functions directory needs its own dependencies installed independently from the rest of the project. Run `npm install` inside `firebase-project/functions` before your first deployment.

2. What do I need to do before deploying the Firebase/Google Cloud server?

You need the Firebase CLI installed globally and authenticated against the correct project before any deployment will work. Run `firebase login` once on your machine, and verify the active project with `firebase use` using `baby-word-tracker`.

Possible Issues with External Resources

1. What should I know about Firebase's free tier before choosing it?

Firebase's free Spark plan includes generous daily limits for Firestore reads, writes, and Cloud Function invocations, but those limits are realistic to hit during heavy testing or during bulk operations such as onboarding many users at once. When the quota is exceeded, the app tends to fail silently rather than show a clear error message, and the limits do not reset until midnight Pacific time. If you expect sustained or heavy usage, upgrading to the Blaze pay-as-you-go plan is the safest way to avoid unexpected downtime.

2. Why is there latency with the various cloud functions?

When a Cloud Function has not been invoked for a while, the first call may take several seconds longer than normal because Firebase needs to spin up a new container. This is most noticeable when classifying a new word by its part of speech or sharing a child for the first time in a session. Subsequent calls in the same session should be faster.