



Stammering Information

The Young School Aged Child

Many young children speak dysfluently at times, especially when they are under some pressure to speak. There is no exact point at which normal dysfluency becomes stammering though there are features which enable us to decide between normal non-fluency and stammering.

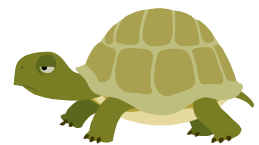


Normal non-fluencies are usually *relaxed* repetitions, often of *whole words* either at the beginning of a phrase or when a child is thinking of how to finish a sentence.

There is a greater risk of stammering developing when the child often gets stuck on words, prolonging or repeating *part of the words* or putting excess effort into finishing them. It is also a concern when the child seems aware of and upset by their dysfluencies. However, one of the things that make it so difficult to say with certainty whether or not a child stutters is that there can be so much variation from day to day and in differing situations.

Here are some ways that parents and teachers can reduce the pressure to talk on young children:

- Show the child you are interested in what they say. It's important the child realises you value what they say not how they say it.
- Slow down the speed of your speech to let the children know that there is plenty of time. Speaking a little slower yourself is likely to help the child without drawing attention to the stammering. This is more helpful than telling them to slow down, take a breath, start again etc which could add pressure and lead to frustration.
- Try to get down to eye level with the child and use language that they are familiar with.
- Reduce the number of questions that you ask and give the child time to reply. Allow your child to choose when to tell you things, rather than asking lots of questions.
- If the child is becoming upset and frustrated because they cannot get their message across, then try to give alternatives e.g. "Did it happen in the class or in the playground?"
- Many children have episodes of easy talking. These times could be used to encourage the child to take part in speaking activities in the class.
- Other things can make the child's non-fluency worse, for example, being interrupted or hurried; competing to speak; expressing complex ideas; using new vocabulary and sentences and when the child is very tired, excited, upset or nervous. Keeping a record of what increases and decreases fluency can let you see patterns which could help your child later. For some children there is no pattern.





- Try not to feel anxious yourself when the child is having problems. Monitor your facial expressions and try to keep eye contact. If you are anxious this may fuel the child's anxiety and so make things harder for you both. Try to put yourself in the child's shoes, look at speaking situations from their point of view and think about what might help.
- Your comments and reactions are important. Try to be supportive and encouraging. If your help results in the child becoming more relaxed about speaking then you are probably doing/saying the right thing.
- In the early stages of stammering some young children are not very aware and are not hindered by their speech, i.e. they are willing to speak out and participate as much as their classmates. If this is the case, continue to encourage participation by involving them in all speaking activities. However, some children are aware and upset by their speech and are not so keen to take part. It is important to have a discussion with the child's parents, the child and the child's Speech and Language Therapist (if they are known) to decide how best to help.
- Please share this information with all who communicate with your child.

For more information visit

STAMMA

The British Stammering Association
stamma.org

STAMMA Helpline 0808 802 0002
(Weekdays 10am-noon, 6-8pm)



The Stuttering Foundation of America
www.stutteringhelp.org



Action for Stammering Children
actionforstammeringchildren.org