



If you are concerned about your child's speech and language development, please talk to your Health Visitor, GP...

...or contact: The Early Years
Speech and Language Therapy Service
Tel: 020 7266 8777

Stammering in preschool children— How parents can help

Taken from:
British Stammering Association
www.stammering.org



Helpful tips for parents and carers

1. Show your child that you are interested in what your child says, not how s/he says it. Try to maintain natural eye-contact when your child is having difficulty talking. Don't finish off sentences yourself- this can be very frustrating for your child.

2. Be supportive. Respond in the same way that you would with any other difficulty that might arise as a child develops new skills. If you feel it's appropriate, acknowledge the difficulty in a matter-of-fact way, so that the child doesn't feel criticised or that the stammer is something that can't be spoken about.

3. Avoid labelling the difficulty. Instead of using the word "stammering", you could use expressions like "bumpy speech" or "getting stuck", or with older children, ask for their own words.

3. If you usually speak quickly, slow down your own rate of speech when you talk with your child. Pausing for a second before you speak can help children to feel less rushed. But telling children to slow down, start again or to take a deep breath is **NOT** helpful. It can make them feel more tense and can interrupt their train of thought.

4. Be encouraging if your child gets upset, just as you would if he or she was upset about any other difficulty. You might say something like "Don't worry, talking can be tricky sometimes."

5. Try to resist seeing your child's speech as a 'problem'. Stammering is not caused by parents, but your anxiety can be passed on to your child. It's possible that s/he may

be struggling a bit at the moment, while learning to talk, but this stage may just pass.

6. Set aside a few minutes at a regular time each day when you can give your full attention to your child in a calm, relaxed atmosphere. You could follow your child's lead in playing or talking about something s/he enjoys. Try to talk about the things you are doing together right now, not about things that happened in the past or are planned for the future.

7. Reduce the number of questions you ask. Instead of asking questions, try commenting on what your child has said or done. When you do ask a question, always give your child plenty of time to answer one question before asking another. This way, s/he is less likely to feel under pressure.

8. Take turns to talk so that everyone in the family can speak without being interrupted. This will reduce the amount that your child is interrupted, or that s/he interrupts others.

9. Respond to your child's behaviour in the same way that you would with a child who does not stammer. As with any other child, discipline needs to be appropriate and consistent.

10. Try to avoid a hectic and rushed lifestyle. Stammering can increase when a child is tired. Children who stammer respond well to a routine, both at home and at nursery or playgroup. It is also helpful to establish regular sleep patterns and a healthy diet.