

Stammering

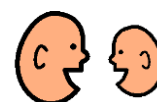
Learning to talk is a very complex process. Up to 8% of children will stammer at some point, most often between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. This tends to be at a time of rapid language development when children are learning lots of new words, and using longer sentences and more complex grammar, which places a higher demand on their speech system which is still developing.

Stammering (also known as stuttering or dysfluency) can present in different ways. You may notice your child doing the following:

- Repeating single sounds, syllables or whole words (e.g. 'D-d-d-daddy', 'Can, can, can, can I have a turn?').
- Stretching sounds out (e.g. 'I like that ssssong').
- Blocking sounds, where words appear stuck altogether and no sound comes out initially (e.g. '---Look').

Some children may show signs of tension in the face or body as well, or they may run out of breath whilst talking. Some young children are unaware that they are stammering. Others may find it frustrating or they may opt out of talking when they feel uncomfortable. A child's fluency is likely to vary at different times and in different situations. They may stammer a lot one day and very little the next. You may notice your child stammering more or less when excited, relaxed, tired or upset.

Most children will go on to talk fluently; a smaller number will continue to stammer. Stammering is only a problem if the child develops negative thoughts and feelings associated with it. There are many successful, happy people who stammer! There are lots of helpful things we can do to support children who stammer.



**Speech and
Language UK**




See [Speech and Language UK](https://www.speechandlanguageuk.com) for more information and advice on stammering.



Strategies for stammering:

- Focus on *what* your child is saying rather than *how* they are saying it.
- Give your child time to speak and try not to finish their words or sentences. Listen patiently and wait for them to finish what they want to say.
- Show that you are listening. Looking, listening and getting down to your child's level shows that you are relaxed and reassures them you are listening.
- Make sure that everyone takes turns to talk without interrupting each other.
- Slow down your own talking. This may mean taking more pauses before you speak. This helps to show your child that there is no rush.
- You don't need to tell your child to 'slow down' or 'start again'. You can reassure them by saying things like 'I'm listening' or 'We have plenty of time'.



- Try to reduce the number of questions you ask. Make comments instead and keep your own sentences short and simple. This helps to reduce talking demands.
- Try setting aside a few minutes each day when you can give your child your full attention. Choose a relaxed time and quiet environment. Let your child choose something to do together during these 5 minutes of Special Time.
- Praise your child's great ideas and their communication in general, regardless of whether they stammer or not. For example, *'That's a great word'*, *'What an interesting story'*, *'I really liked the way you explained that'*. 
- Some parents can feel anxious when a child starts stammering but try to remain calm and relaxed. Consider the language you use to describe talking (e.g. *'His stammer's been bad recently'*). Try to use neutral, matter of fact language (e.g. *'He's been stammering more recently'*).
- If your child gets frustrated or is avoiding talking, be supportive and talk openly to reassure them. If appropriate, you might want to say something like *'It's ok, I'm listening'*, *'I can see talking was a bit bumpy then'*, *'Don't worry, talking can be tricky sometimes. You're still learning'*.



For further information and advice:



STAMMA (British Stammering Association):
www.stamma.org



Action for Stammering Children:
www.actionforstammeringchildren.org

STAMMA

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