

# Stammering in young children: helpful tips for parents

**1. Show your child that you are interested in what he says, not how he says it.**

Try to maintain natural eye-contact when he is having difficulty talking. Don't finish his sentences - this can be frustrating for him.

**2. Be supportive.**

Respond to a speech difficulty in the same way that you would with any other difficulties that arise as they develop their skills, such as when they trip over or spill things. If you feel it's appropriate, acknowledge the difficulty in a matter-of-fact way, so that she doesn't feel criticised. Avoid labeling the difficulty as stammering. You could use expressions like "bumpy speech" or "getting stuck", or ask her for her own words or descriptions.

**3. If you speak quickly, slow down your own rate of speech when you talk to your child.**

Telling him to slow down, start again or to take a deep breath is unhelpful. Pausing for a second before you answer or ask a question can also help him to feel less rushed.

**4. Be encouraging if your child gets upset about her speech, just as you would if she was upset about any other difficulty.**

You might say something like "Don't worry; talking can be tricky sometimes when you're still learning."

**5. Observe your child's speaking patterns but try to resist seeing it as a 'problem'.**

Stammering is not caused by parents, but your anxiety can be passed on to your child, who may feel he is doing something wrong. In fact, he is just struggling a bit at the moment, and the stage may well 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.**

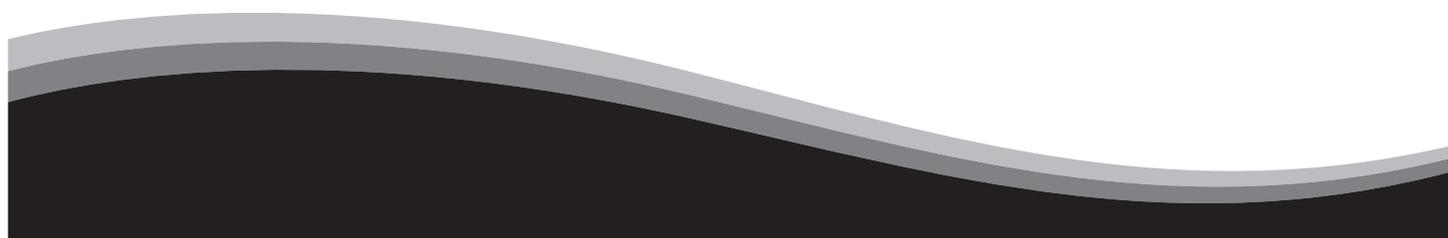
You could follow her lead in playing or talk about something she likes. Try to talk about the things you are doing together right now, not about things that happened in the past or are planned for the future.

**7. Reduce the number of questions you ask.**

Always give your child plenty of time to answer one question before asking another. This way, he is less likely to feel under pressure. Keep your sentences short and simple and instead of asking questions, simply comment on what your child has said, thereby letting him know you are listening.

**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 she 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 your child is tired. Children who stammer respond well to a routine and structured environment at home and at nursery or playgroup. It is also helpful to establish regular sleep patterns and a regular healthy diet.

### When speaking to your child

- slow down your rate of speech, but **don't** tell your child to slow down or take a deep breath
- let your child have **special time** when she leads the way with an activity of her choice
- try to use **comments** rather than questions. For example, when your child finishes school instead of asking "What did you do today?" try commenting by saying "You look like you've had a busy day."
- if you must ask questions, **ask one question at a time** and give him plenty of time to answer
- use short, simple sentences

### When listening to your child

- **keep eye-contact** and get down to their level
- **pay attention** to what your child is saying, not how he says it
- **pause** before answering questions
- make sure **everyone gets a turn** to speak
- **acknowledge** speech difficulties with reassurance and encouragement - not with corrections or criticism

### Other people

- **ask other adults** in your child's life to follow this guidance

If you need any further advice or have any questions, please call the Wirral Community NHS Trust Speech and Language Therapy team on **0151 514 2334** and ask to speak to a speech and language therapist.

For further information the following website is useful:

**[www.stamma.org/get-support](http://www.stamma.org/get-support)**

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net)

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