

**You can refer yourself to the  
Speech and Language Therapy Service.**

**Or ask your Health Visitor, Early Years' Worker  
or GP to refer.**

**It is best to get advice early on.**

**Please contact:  
Speech & Language Therapy Service Office  
Tel.: ☎ (01803) 654539**

**Or:**

**Jane Baker,  
Clinical Lead for Disorders of Fluency,  
Speech and Language Therapist  
Tel: ☎ 01626 357098  
[jane.baker@nhs.net](mailto:jane.baker@nhs.net).**

**British Stammering Association  
[www.stammering.org](http://www.stammering.org)**

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South Devon Healthcare **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust



***PATIENT  
INFORMATION***

Speech and Language Therapy

**How to help your child who  
sometimes stammers/stutters**

**A guide for parents**

## Learning to talk is complicated!

It is as natural to stumble over your talking, as it is when learning to walk.

It takes time to learn new skills.

Some children are more likely to stammer/stutter when they are learning to talk, especially if someone else in the family stammers. They are not doing it on purpose.

- They may repeat the sound or word at the start of a sentence, like “M.m.m.m.m.m.mummy”.
- They might prolong a word, like “Mmmmmmmmmmmummy”.
- They might get stuck, like “.....m.....ummy”.
- They might get frustrated when it is hard to talk.

You may notice that sometimes it is easy for them to talk, and other times – especially when they are tired, excited, anxious or trying to explain something – it is hard for them to speak. You may notice that changes in his/her life make it hard to talk.

## How can I help?

1. Give your child at least five minutes a day of your full attention in a **calm and relaxed atmosphere**.
2. **Slow down your own speech** when you talk with your child. Put **natural pauses** in your speech. This makes it easier for him/her to follow what you are saying. Slowing down your own speech gives your child a **good model** to follow and helps him/her to **feel less rushed**. This is more helpful than giving the child advice. Never tell your child to slow down, **just slow down yourself**.
3. **Pause for one second** before you answer or ask a question. This slow, less hurried way of speaking gives your child time and is a good model for your child.

4. Use the same sort of **short and simple sentences** as your child.
5. Let your child **finish what they are saying** and **try not to speak for them**.
6. **Praise** your child as this will build their confidence.
7. Encourage everyone in the family to **share turns talking** and **listening** to each other. Avoid speaking over each other.
8. Keep natural eye contact to show **you are listening to what** your child is saying. Try not to react badly when they stammer/stutter, instead **relax** your own muscles. Children pick up on your feelings and anxiety.
9. Try to keep to **regular routines** at home. Children respond well to routine and structure. Try to avoid a hectic and rushed life-style.
10. Pay special attention to **regular bed-times** (same time all week) to ensure good sleep patterns.
11. Stop anyone ridiculing your child's difficulties. Teasing will make it worse. Do not label your child a “Stammerer”.
12. Try to **reduce the amount of questions** you ask. Always let your child answer one before you ask another!
13. Tell everyone in your child's life how to help, **share this advice**.