



Preschool Stuttering Guide

Common Questions:

“What is stuttering?”

Stuttering is “bumpy speech” with both neurological and genetic causes. It may appear suddenly and include: repetition of sounds (b-b-bee), prolongation of sounds (bbbbee) or blocks (i.e. getting “stuck” on a word).

“Is stuttering ‘normal’?”

Stuttering is okay and we all do it! The average person stutters in day-to-day conversation, it is just so minimal we don’t usually notice it. If stuttering is getting in the way of a child communicating, happening a lot, or continues past the age of three, it is no longer typical.

“When should we start treatment?”

Treatment should begin if a child is past 3-years-old and continuing to stutter.

“What does treatment look like?”

Treatment includes a.)teaching parents, caregivers, and professionals tools to use to change the environment, AND b.)teaching the child to recognize different types of speech, and use tools to modify their own speech.

“How long until they stop stuttering?”

There is no way to answer this accurately. However, research says starting treatment sooner leads to greater outcomes. Treatment progress should increase periods of “smooth” speech and reduce the “bumpy” times. Sometimes, stuttering may not completely fade away. We can continue encouraging them to communicate and know that “bumps” are ok!

Strategies to use at home/school:

1. Reduce your rate with pauses

Practice slowing your own speech by placing pauses between every few words. (E.g. “I use smooth speech...when I talk like this...and add in pauses”). This naturally reduces your rate and makes sure we don’t end up sounding robotic!

2. Remove time pressures and reduce demands for talking

Give your undivided attention, nod along, and patiently wait for them to finish.



3. Use modified questions This helps reduce your rate and remove time pressures. Try out: “I wonder...”, “I think...”, “Let’s see if...”, “I bet...”, and “Why don’t we try...”.

4. Use recasting and rephrasing

Simply repeat what your child has said with smooth speech (make sure it’s grammatically correct, too!). This shows them we heard and understood what they said, and also gives us an opportunity to model smooth speech.

5. Create a supportive environment

Continue to encourage them to talk. Let them know we all have bumps and stuttering is okay! Avoid negative talk (e.g. “We’re having a bad day”). Instead try using descriptive terms (e.g. “We’re having a bumpy day”).

Types of Speech:

Smooth Speech: Fluent speech

Bumpy Speech: Disfluent/stuttered speech

Animal Talk:

Turtle talk: Smooth speech with built-in pauses (E.g. “I use smooth speech...when I talk like this...and add in pauses”)

Rabbit talk: Fast speech that rambles on and on, with no pauses (E.g. “ItalkreallyfastwhenI’mexcited”)

Kangaroo talk: Speech that h-h-h-hops on sounds (also called sound or word repetitions) (E.g. “I-I-I like to play”).

Snake talk: Speech that sssssslithers on sounds (also called prolongations) (E.g. “Sssstop right there”).

Describing “Bumps”:

Hard bumps: “bumpy” speech that is long and has a lot of struggle

Easy bumps: “bumpy” speech that may be shorter, or contain less tension or struggle