

Questions Teachers May Have About Stuttering

What should I do when a child stutters in my class?

The most important thing to do when a child is stuttering is to be a good communicator yourself.

- Keep eye contact and give the child enough time to finish speaking.
- Try not to fill in words or sentences.
- Let the child know by your manner and actions that you are listening to what she says—not how she says it.
- Model wait time – taking two seconds before you answer a child’s question – and insert more pauses into your own speech to help reduce speech pressure.

These suggestions will benefit all of the children in your class.

Do not make remarks like “slow down,” “take a deep breath,” “relax,” or “think about what you’re going to say, then say it.” We often say these things to children because slowing down, relaxing, or thinking about what we are going to say helps us when we feel like we’re having a problem tripping over our words. Stuttering, though, is a different kind of speaking problem and this kind of advice is simply not helpful to the child who stutters.

What should I do when the child who stutters interrupts another child?

Handle interruptions the same way that you would for a child who doesn’t stutter. Children who stutter sometimes interrupt others because it’s easier to get speech going while others are talking. We’re not sure exactly why it’s easier to talk over others, but it may be because less attention is called to the child at the beginning of her turn when stuttering is most likely to occur.

Even though it may be easier to get her speech going by interrupting a peer, it’s important for the child who stutters to learn the rules for good communication just like all the other children in your class.

How should I handle teasing?

Deal with teasing as you would with any other child who is being teased. Teasing is an experience common to many children, not just those who stutter.

What types of things can I say to encourage the child who stutters to talk in my class?

The best way to encourage a child who stutters to talk in your class is to let him know through your words and actions that what he says is important, not the way he says it. Other ways you can encourage the child:

- Praise him for sharing his ideas;
- Tell him that stuttering does not bother you;
- Give him opportunities to talk, such as calling on him to give an answer or asking him for his opinion; and,
- Let him know it’s ok to stutter.

Adapted from *Stuttering: Straight Talk for Teachers* by L. Scott Trautman, C. Guitar, K. Chmela, and W. Murphy