



Stuttering is also known as dysfluency, or stammering.

Stuttering is where the flow or 'fluency' of speech is interrupted. It can look and sound like:

- **Repetitions.** E.g. "and and and then we went to the shop / c c c could I have a coffee"
- **Prolonged sounds.** E.g. "it's on Sssssunday"
- **Blocks** (no sound coming out or strained sounds). E.g. "My name is _____ Rowan"
- Face and body **movements** as the person tenses their muscles or tries to push the sounds out. E.g. extra blinking, extra mouth movements, hand tapping, looking away.

Stuttering is not always predictable. Some people who stutter can go for hours or days at a time without any noticeable stuttering, then they might stutter lots in one conversation. It can be affected by lots of things, like tiredness or who the person is talking to.

Research suggests that stuttering is caused by differences in the parts of the brain that support speech production. It is not caused by stress or anxiety, but these can make stuttering happen more.

Stuttering affects each person differently. Some people are ok with their stutter and don't feel the need to change the way they speak. Other people try to hide their stuttering by avoiding saying certain words or situations that may trigger more stuttering. Unfortunately, many people who stutter experience struggle, frustration, shame, embarrassment, or anxiety about speaking. We can help people to feel more comfortable and confident about speaking.

For young children, the goal of speech therapy is usually to reduce the amount of stuttering. For older children and adults, therapy is different for each person. Some people want to learn ways to control their stutter and to speak more fluently. Other people want to learn to feel more comfortable with stuttering and accept it as part of their self-identity. Regardless of age, the aim of speech therapy is to reduce the negative impact that stuttering has on the person's life.

What can I do to help?

The most important way to support someone who stutters is to be a good listener:

- ✓ Listen patiently when they speak. Although well-intentioned, comments like 'slow down' or 'take a breath' don't usually help. Time-pressure or pressure to speak fluently may make the person stutter more.
- ✓ Enforce turn-taking so that they get the opportunity to speak without interruptions.
- ✓ Don't finish their words or sentences unless they have agreed in advance that you can do this to help.
- ✓ Show you're interested in what they're saying.
- ✓ Stay calm and be aware of your reactions to stuttering. Showing children that it's ok if they stutter will help them to develop healthy attitudes about their speech.
- ✓ Examine your own thoughts, feelings, and possible biases about stuttering.
- ✓ Your **support** can boost their confidence and help them feel more comfortable when they talk.

Contact a speech pathologist for support: they are trained to help with all aspects of stuttering.

If you notice that your child has started to stutter, it's best to seek advice from a speech pathologist as soon as possible. The sooner support can be given, the less likely it is that stuttering will make a negative impact.

Stuttering is a valid way to communicate.

There is a growing movement to view stuttering as one of many ways of speaking, rather than as a problem that needs to be fixed. Our goal is for all people to communicate well and to feel welcomed and included, regardless of how fluently they speak.

Encouraging verbal diversity means appreciating and including different ways of speaking in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

For more information:

- [What is stuttering? | University of Technology Sydney \(uts.edu.au\)](https://www.uts.edu.au/what-is-stuttering/)
- [stuttering-en.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/stuttering-en.pdf)

Support Organisations:

SAY: Australia

Based in Melbourne, SAY: Australia aims to help children and teenagers who stutter. They offer in-person programs in Melbourne and online meetups for young people who stutter, including an annual summer camp: [Stuttering 101 - SAY: Australia \(sayaustralia.org.au\)](https://sayaustralia.org.au/stuttering-101)

STAMMA

A UK-based organisation who raises awareness about stuttering. The website contains lots of useful information, personal stories and advice: www.stamma.org

National Stuttering Association (NSA)

An American organisation providing support and information to the stuttering community: www.westutter.org

