

Supporting Your Child's Fluency

Between the ages of approximately two and five years it is common for a child to repeat words and phrases or hesitate while they are thinking of what they are trying to say. This can sound like a stammer or stutter. About 5% of children will go through a stammering phase when they develop language. Most children will return to fluent speech without any help, however, one in five children could go onto developing ongoing issues with stammering.

It is not easy to distinguish those children who will recover naturally from those who may need additional help. If you continue to have concerns about your child please contact the SLT Helpline to discuss most appropriate support.

Here are 5 'top tips' to help

1	Slow down the rate of your own speech – This is often more effective than asking a child to “slow down” as they may not know how.
2	Reduce the number of questions you ask your child – Questions can put a child under pressure. Simply comment on what your child is doing instead. E.g. Rather than saying “What are you playing with?” you could say: “you are playing with the red car.”
3	Give your child time to talk – Try not to finish what your child is saying. It is also helpful to create times when your child has your undivided attention in a relaxed situation. This can help build confidence.
4	Focus on ‘what’ they are saying rather than ‘how’ they are saying it – This shows your child that you are interested in what they are saying. Try to maintain natural eye contact and respond to what they have said as you would if they were speaking fluently.
5	Be supportive – Do not draw attention to their talking if they are not aware that they are getting stuck. Only if your child is aware, support them as you would with any other problem and acknowledge the dysfluency in a matter-of-fact way e.g. “that word sounded a bit tricky” or “everyone gets stuck with talking sometimes.”