



GUIDE FOR TEACHERS:



Children with Developmental Stuttering



Why do you
speak like that?



I s-s-stutter.





WHAT IS STUTTERING?

Stuttering is a fluency disorder that affects the flow and rate of speech. It is a physical disorder and not a language or psychological disorder. The child knows what they want to say but just cannot get the words out.

EXAMPLES OF STUTTERING³

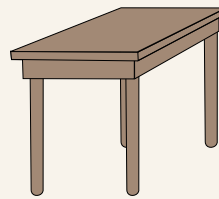
1

Repetition of a sound, syllable or word

Sound: "t-t-table"

Syllable: "ta-ta-table"

Word: "table-table"



2

Prolongation (dragging) of a sound

"taaable"

3

Blocks (get stuck on a word) during speech when faced with a problematic word or sound

"I want to go to the ...(block) museum."



4

Secondary behaviours when speaking

E.g. Eye blinks, jaw tremors or facial twitches.



STUTTERING: WHEN DOES IT OCCUR?

Onset may be gradual or sudden

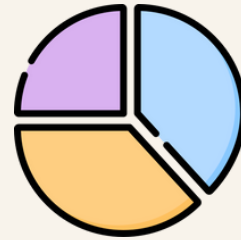
Begins in first **2 to 3 years** of life when there is rapid growth in language development. About **95%** of children who stutter start stuttering before 4 years old. ³



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Incidence: 4 to 5% of children (3-4 years of age)

Prevalence: About 1% of population



CAUSES OF STUTTERING ¹⁷

Actual cause is still unknown but likely multifactorial

Genetics
(about 60-70% of people who stutter have a family member who stutters)



Problem with Neural Processing
(parts of the brain that control speech)



Risk factors of Stuttering

What are risk factors?

Risk factors are variables associated with the child that increases the chances of the child developing stuttering.

“

I read online that boys are more likely to stutter, is that true...?

”

5, 29

Yes. **Gender** is a risk factor of stuttering. Boys are **3x more likely** to stutter and may be less likely to outgrow stuttering than girls.

“

Oh I see... Are there any other risk factors of stuttering?

”

Yes. Additionally, **family history** of stuttering increases the likelihood of stuttering. 5, 25, 29



It is important to note that **Bilingualism** is not a risk factor or cause of stuttering!

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Normal Disfluency vs Stuttering



“My student is stumbling on words e.g. What- Where is my ball? Is that normal?”

What is Disfluency?²

“Fluency refers to continuity, smoothness, rate, and effort of speech. When we hesitate, use fillers, or repeat ourselves during speech, it is known as disfluency.”



As preschool children are still developing their language, it is **normal** for children to have disfluencies in speech! In addition to these **normal disfluencies**, children who stutter can also produce **blocks, repetitions and prolongations** that tend to occur more frequently and can be associated with greater **tension or effort**.

Normal disfluencies^{1, 3} (not stuttering)

- **Revisions**
"What.. where is my ball?"

- **Unfinished words**
"How is the... "

- **Interjection**
"I want *errrr* the book."

- **Phrase repetition**
"That is *that is that is* mine!"

- **Polysyllabic word repetition**
"Gimme *gimme* the book!"



Can children who stutter recover on their own?

10, 18, 25

70-80% of children can recover spontaneously before 7 years of age.

However, they may be less likely to grow out of it if they:

- 1 Are male
- 2 Begin stuttering at a later age
- 3 Have a family member that did not recover from stuttering
- 4 Stutter for more than 6 to 12 months
- 5 Have poorer language skills



When is the best time to seek help?

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Prompt diagnosis and early intervention (**before 6 years old**) is crucial in yielding the best outcome from therapy.

Delaying treatment may result in long-term persistence of stuttering and could impact the child negatively.



Impact of Stuttering



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1 SPEECH IMPACT

Talks less and takes a longer time to speak. Avoids using certain words that trigger stuttering which may impact grammar and interpersonal engagement.

2 AFFECTED TEMPERAMENT AND SELF REGULATION

Older children who stutter 4, 24 have been found to have "higher scores on the Anger/Frustration, Impulsivity, and Sadness subscales".



3

MENTAL/ EMOTIONAL



Due to bullying/teasing faced in school, child may feel anxious, sad and reluctant to attend school or other social situations.

4

IMPACT ON SELF-ESTEEM 4, 24

Prefer to spend time by themselves and possibly avoid talking to other people.

5

FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION

Self-conscious of what others might think. May prevent them from demonstrating what they know.



Impact of Stuttering

6

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

11, 20



Stuttering may affect learning experiences and lead to negative impact on academic performance, especially when assessment is oral.



The child may not fulfil their full academic/vocational potential.

7

AFFECTED RELATIONSHIPS

Reduced participation in social situations and group work leads to difficulties maintaining social relationships.



8

FUTURE PROSPECTS

6, 22



May choose jobs with less communication requirements. May affect promotion prospects.



9

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Employers' perspectives:



85% agreed stuttering decreases employability;
40% agreed it would interfere with promotions.

Some people think jobs with minimal social interaction are most suitable for people who stutter.

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SOCIAL

9



Negative attitudes towards speech and communication may increase with age and may have an impact on self-confidence and social participation.

Teachers are crucial because...

They are often the **first** people to help **identify** children who stutter in preschools!

They can refer students who stutter to an SLT **immediately**.



SLTs may approach them to find out more about **stuttering events** in school.

They can assist SLTs in **collecting speech samples in all languages** in the classroom.



Tips for teachers



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1

Adjust to the speech fluency of Children who Stutter

During periods of **fluency**, give them **more opportunities** to speak.

During periods of **stuttering**, **reduce** the amount of speech.
e.g. ask close ended questions, multiple choice questions, or break questions into smaller parts

Is the boy
drawing?

What did he draw?

Did he draw a
flower or a book?

What colour was the
flower?



2

Talk slower

Children who stutter are less likely to stutter when conversational partners speak slower than them.¹³



Tips for teachers



3

Use more wait time

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Let children who stutter have more time to say what they want to say.

→ Avoid helping children who stutter finish their stuttered words.

→ Instead, praise their effort in speaking.



Avoid interrupting them - even with encouraging words like "take your time".

4

Choral reading

8



Let children who stutter read aloud in unison with classmates.

→ Reading together with someone helps to reduce stuttering and helps the child to build confidence in a supported environment.

Tips for teachers



5

Be an emotional support for children who stutter

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Maintain interest and engagement with children who stutter

- Make children who stutter feel that they are being heard by **maintaining eye contact**



Avoid scolding the child when they stutter

Why?

- It may cause the child to stutter more
- Child may associate speaking with negative experiences

Instead, remain **patient** and **encourage them to participate!**



Talk to your students about stuttering and how we can all **be supportive**

- Ensure **equal opportunities for speaking** between children who stutter and other preschoolers

6

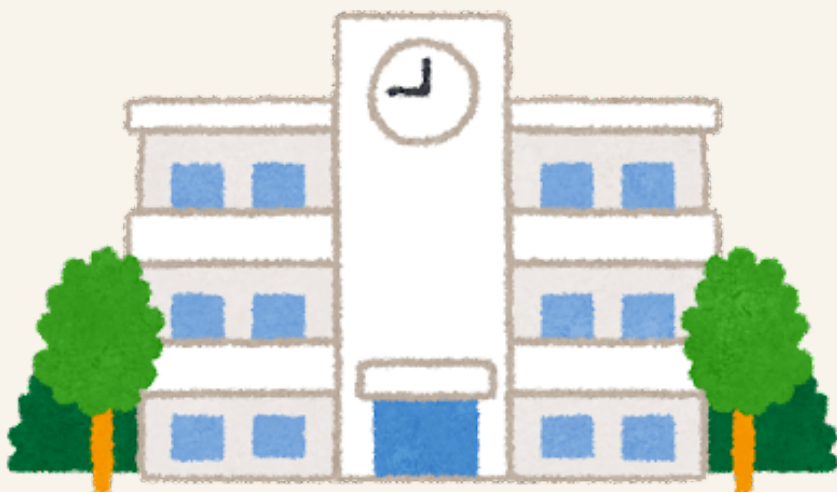
Never imitate stuttering



WHERE TO SEEK SLT SERVICES

Here's where you can find SLT services:

- **Public Hospitals**
 - Visit a General Practitioner or a Polyclinic to get a referral letter to access SLT services in public hospitals.
- **Private Hospitals/Clinics**
 - Contact them directly for an appointment.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

As a pre-school teacher, you play a **vital role** in helping to identify children who stutter **early**!



If you observe your student showing signs of stuttering, refer them to an SLT immediately!



Remember that it is **important** for stuttering treatment to be done before **6 years of age** to allow a child to have the **best chance of eliminating stuttering**! This can prevent such children from experiencing possible long term negative effects of stuttering.



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