



Happy Talk's Top 10 Tips for Developing Fluency

1. Special Time



Try to arrange 5 minutes a day of 'special time.' This is where your child can have your undivided attention in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. There will be no pressure and the activity will be what the child chooses to do. The goal here is focussing on what your child is saying and not how they are saying it and using the strategies listed below.

2. Be Face to Face

Show your child you are listening with face-to-face contact and get down to their level if possible. Try not to look away from them or demonstrate any other facial expression of worry or concern when they are having difficulty talking.

Showing that you are listening to what they are saying with your body language helps them to know that they do not have to get your attention in addition to saying what they want to say. You can also let your child know that you are listening and going to listen by saying "I am listening." Sometimes daily life doesn't allow for us to listen such as when we are concentrating on driving or cooking. This is ok, you can let your child know that you are not able to listen at that time but once you have finished what you are doing you will be able to listen to them.



3. How to Respond

Respond to your child's communication as you would if they were not stammering. If we react non-verbally or comment on a child's talking it will draw their attention to it. This is because we have provided a suggestion to change the way they have started talking and that there is something wrong. It is important to avoid drawing their attention to it if they are not aware.

If you tell your child to slow down/start again/take a breath, they may be able to do it for a moment or two, but it is unlikely that it will last and may cause frustration. It would be more helpful to slow down your own rate of talking, demonstrate taking a breath, and restarting sentences yourself. This helps to:

- Create a calm and relaxed atmosphere for speaking
- Models a slower rate of talking
- Demonstrates that it's ok to make mistakes





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4. Praise



Everybody loves praise, especially young children. Praising them on all of their achievements, no matter how small, motivates them to keep trying. It also builds confidence and self-esteem.

You can offer praise by smiling and using a positive action e.g. clapping, high fives or thumbs up, giving a cuddle or by saying an encouraging comment.

5. Give Time

Allow time for your child to finish what they have to say, rather than finishing it for them.

This is so that your child does not come to rely on an adult or other children to finish what they want to say. They may also find it frustrating that they cannot finish what they want to say.



6. Take Turns



Pay attention to the number of times that your child is being interrupted, or interrupts others. Explain to all the family/class the importance of taking turns when talking.

It is important that a child is given the time to speak but also understands that others need time to speak in conversation too. This can be tricky with younger children and siblings. Using an item such as a 'talking stick' will help them to see whose turn it is to speak.

7. Ask Simple Questions

We all ask questions, and when a child is asked a question, they are expected to respond. Your child's ability to answer fluently will depend on how difficult the question is and how good their language skills are. You can help your child to answer more fluently by:

- Avoiding questions that are too complicated for your child. If they are struggling to answer, rephrase your question. 'Who' 'what' and 'where' questions are easier to answer than 'why' 'how' and 'when' questions.
- Giving them plenty of time to think of and give their reply.
- Avoiding asking another question before they have had time to answer the first one.
- Reduce the number of questions you ask and comment instead e.g. "what's that?" → "it's a car!"





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8. Acknowledge your Child's Feeling



Not being able to get your words out can be very frustrating. If your child demonstrates that they are aware or becoming frustrated or upset about their speech, let them know that you understand they are feeling cross/upset/frustrated and that you are there to help them. This will let them know that they are not alone, that their feelings are understood and that someone is there to help.

9. Be Open

If your child speaks to you about their difficulties, provide discussion and openness about not being fluent (but not as a direct response to them stammering) For example:

- Discuss that nobody's speech is perfectly smooth and that even adults have bumpy speech sometimes.
- Model this to them yourself when you are talking e.g., "can you pass me the erm erm erm r r remote control? I couldn't quite get my words out then. That's ok though."
- Use their own words of what they describe about their difficulty talking e.g. saying 'my words get stuck'

This is so that your child knows it is ok to stammer and the more we can normalise that and help them to take ownership of it, the more progress they will make. For example, instead of them thinking "oh no I can't say this because my words will get stuck" they will think "if my word get stuck it is ok, it does not matter." which is a much more positive mindset towards talking and will help to reduce their worries.

10. Keep Language Simple



Keeping language simple by using single words and short sentences makes it easier for children to understand and respond to what you are saying. Talk about the present and things that can be seen. This will help to reduce the processing load for your child to support their fluency.

Get in Touch!



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