



# Handy Handouts®

Free, educational handouts for teachers and parents\*

Number 351



## Using an Appropriate Rate of Speech

by Rynette R. Kjesbo, M.S., CCC-SLP

Your rate of speech is how fast or slow you say your words. Everyone has a different rate of speech depending on his/her location, age, culture, and how he/she feels. In order to communicate effectively we must speak at a rate of speech that our listeners can understand. Use the steps below to help teach students how to use an appropriate rate of speech. Have them read/repeat the self-talk statements that follow each one. Then have a discussion about rate of speech. You can start the discussion with this question: *What are some situations in which you had to adjust your rate of speech?*



1. **Listen to the people around you** – Different people speak at different rates. Listen to find out which rates of speech are easier to understand than others.

*I will listen to others to figure out if a faster or slower rate of speech is easier to understand.*

2. **Consider your listener's knowledge of the topic** – If your listener is unfamiliar with a topic, you might need to slow your rate of speech to give him/her more time to think about your message.

*I will slow my rate of speech if my listener is unfamiliar with the subject I am talking about.*

3. **Relax** – If you are nervous about speaking, you may tend to speak at a faster rate than normal.

*I will take a deep breath and try to relax so I will not speak too fast.*

4. **Use pauses when you speak** – Commas and periods are used to mark breaks in written language. Spoken language should also have breaks. If you speak too fast, try pausing briefly between phrases and sentences.

*I will add brief pauses between my phrases and sentences if I speak too fast.*

5. **Pay attention to your listener** – Watch and listen to your speaking partner. He/She may be giving you hints that you are speaking too fast or too slow.

*I will watch for clues from my listener that tell me I need to adjust my rate of speech.*

6. **Practice speaking at different rates of speech** – Using a stopwatch, see how long it takes to read a paragraph at your normal speaking rate. Then practice reading the same paragraph with slower and faster speaking rates.

*I will practice using slower and faster speaking rates.*

7. **Don't expect your rate of speech to change overnight** – Changing your rate of speech can take time. You have to keep practicing!

*I will continue to practice using an appropriate rate of speech.*



For more Handy Handouts®, go to [www.handyhandouts.com](http://www.handyhandouts.com).

### Helpful Products

The list of Super Duper® products below may be helpful when working with children who have special needs. Visit [www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com) and type in the item name or number in our search engine. Click the links below to see the product descriptions.

*Simply Social 7™ at School*  
[Item #BK-371](#)

*Focus on Manners! Fun Deck®*  
[Item #FD-103](#)

*Stopwatch & Counter*  
[Item #SW-22](#)

*Communicate™ Junior Game*  
[Item #TPX-4401](#)

\*Handy Handouts® are for classroom and personal use only. Any commercial use is strictly prohibited.