

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

I Have a Student In My Class Who Stutters. What Should I Do?

by Adrienne DeWitt, MA, CCC-SLP

Stuttering impacts approximately five percent of students during their lifetime, so many teachers struggle to create the best classroom environment for students who stutter. Stuttering, which is a type of fluency disorder, interrupts the flow of speech and can create a barrier for students to communicate during class discussions, oral presentations, and reading out loud. Students who stutter are as intelligent and creative as other students and have invaluable contributions to make in the learning environment. Below are some suggestions for teachers to promote communication in the classroom:



During one-on-one interactions

- Keep an open dialogue with the student about what he/she needs to communicate effectively while maintaining academic expectations. Stuttering is often unpredictable; some days may be more difficult than others for the student to speak.
- Maintain eye contact, keep a neutral expression, and let the student know you have plenty of time to listen to what he/she is saying.
- Avoid instructing the student to, “Relax,” “Slow down,” or “Think about what you want to say.” The student is already trying to speak fluently. These remarks cause unneeded pressure and are not helpful to the student.
- Avoid finishing the student’s sentences. This may seem helpful but can make the student feel what he/she says is not important.
- Only remind the student to use fluency techniques if instructed to do so by his/her speech-language pathologist.



During classroom discussion

- Model speaking habits that you would like to see in your students, such as speaking slowly and pausing frequently.
- Give the student opportunities to speak and praise attempts to participate orally.
- Model the good listening skills of maintaining eye contact, actively thinking about the message of the speaker, and waiting for your turn to talk/taking turns when talking.
- Model “think/wait time” by pausing before answering a question rather than quickly calling out answers.

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students
(cont.)



Oral Presentations

- Help the student find ways to practice that will make him/her feel more comfortable (at home, with the teacher, SLP, or friend, etc.)
- Allow the student to choose his/her presentation order (first, last, in the middle)
- Other accommodations might include giving the report in private or to a small group and extended time/no timing requirements if the speech is timed



Reading Aloud/Answering Questions

- Children who stutter are sometimes fluent when reading aloud with another person.
- Practice choral reading and reading aloud in pairs/small groups to help the student who stutters become more confident in reading aloud. This also allows the child to participate in the class activity and not feel left out.
- Confirm with the student if he/she would like to be called on randomly or only if he/she raises a hand.
- Let the class know they have plenty of time to answer when called on.

The most important point to emphasize to students who stutter is that what they say is important, not how they say it. By focusing on the content of the message, the student can feel more motivated to speak and confident that his/her ideas are an integral part of the conversation. For further tips on how to create a better communication environment, consult with your school's Speech-Language Pathologist.

Resources:

"Notes to the Teacher." The Stuttering Foundation, accessed 2/6/24 from <https://www.stutteringhelp.org/notes-teacher>

"Educators." National Stuttering Association, accessed August 10, 2018, <http://www.nsastutter.org/>

"FAQs for Teachers." Stuttering Foundation, accessed August 9, 2018, <https://www.stutteringhelp.org/faqs-teachers>

"Five Myths About Stuttering." Stuttering Foundation, accessed August 15, 2018, <https://www.stutteringhelp.org/five-myths-about-stuttering>

"Stuttering." American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, accessed August 9, 2018, <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering.htm#other>

For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to www.handyhandouts.com