



# 4 Incredible Stuttering Treatment Techniques for Preschool Children Who Stutter

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This is the most comprehensive (but readable) list of therapy techniques for preschool children who stutter you'll find anywhere.

If you feel like you're out of your league treating stuttering, you won't once you finish this list.

Hey, Stephen Groner here, fluently-speaking person who stutters and certified speech-language pathologist. I can still remember the first time I ordered *what I actually wanted* off a menu, not just what would come out at the time.

Freakin' freedom. That's what I want for your preschool kiddos.

Below you'll find every helpful stuttering treatment strategy I could find for preschool children who stutter, written in easily-understandable language with practice examples and a link to its source.

Are you ready? Thought so.



## Age 2-6: Preschool-Age Children

In preschool (ages 2-6), therapy is usually most often about changing the environment around the child who stutters so their brain can figure out to get them more fluent on their own, instead of making a very young child master intricate speech techniques (this is also called indirect therapy).

These first few are some of the best changes to their environment you can make.

### **The Slowed-Down Speech Technique (For Parents)**

This technique does two things: first, it models for your child what a smoother, more fluent way of speaking sounds like and secondly, it builds more time into the conversation so your child will feel less rushed (and therefore be more fluent).

How to do the Slowed-Down Speech Technique:

- Whenever you're talking around your child who stutters, consciously slow down the speed of your words a notch or two, like you're plodding through snow as you speak:
  - So instead of talking like this telling them about going to see grand ma"
  - "Taalk a bit slllower, liike this, taaking a bit more tiime speeking comfortably aand slowly."
- You can also slow down your speech by adding more pauses in natural places and holding them a beat longer than you normally would:
  - "So instead of talking like this and never putting in a break..."

- Talk more like this.....with slight pauses sprinkled throughout your speech.....giving it a.....more relaxed, easy, and.....open way about it.”
- Also, slow down your speech at the beginning of sentences, where children who stutter have it the hardest, by consciously stretching out the beginning of the first word in the sentence:
  - “Aaaaaaas you talk sweetly to your child or play with them, stretch out the first word in each sentence. Thiiiiiiiis will show them that they have more time to speak and get their words out.”
- Also, you can reflect your child’s sentences back to them at a slightly slower speed to show them what it sounds like:
  - So if they say, “I-i-i wwwent to music class t-today a-a-aaand we played the drums!” You would just say “You went to music class today and played their drums?” in a very slow, easy, and relaxed way.

This is all gonna feel slightly weird at first. But it can help an awful lot. And children pick up on it, almost unconsciously. And then it can change the way they speak.

Here’s a [source](#), and [another](#).

### **The Reduced Demands Technique (for Parents)**

Although we don’t often think about it, talking effortlessly in front of people can be pretty difficult, especially if your child stutters.

That’s why it can be so powerful for children who stutter if the demands placed on them around speaking are dialed waaaaaay back. A lighter speaking burden leads to easier, more fluent speech.

Here’s how to do that:

- Have daily, one-on-one time alone with your child, just you and them.
- Let them take the lead on what gets played with and talked about and follow them there. Whatever they're interested in is what you should be interested in.
- Don't finish their sentences for them or guess what they're trying to say, even though it may feel like you're trying to help.
- Make more comments instead of asking questions so they don't feel like they're in the hot seat (for example, when talking about a knight, say "He's climbing up the castle" [comment] instead of "What's he doing now?" [question]).
- When you *do* ask a question, ask them "closed" questions, which can be answered with a single word or small fact, instead of "open" ones, which require more complicated language:
  - For instance, instead of asking, "What did you do in school today?" which is pretty open-ended and complex to answer, you could ask, "Did you go to art class today?" and after that, "Did you like it?" Which require only a "yes" or "no" answer.
- Leave a brief pause between turns in the conversation. When they ask or say something, pause for one beat before you respond, to show them they have more time to talk.
- Everytime they say something, no matter how it comes out, make them feel like what they've said is the most important and meaningful thing in the entire world to you in that moment. Focus on the message beneath the stuttering, not the stop-and-start method in which it's conveyed.

In the whirlwind of life, young children who stutter can often lose in the competition of communication. Give them an easier way where they can win. They'll oftentimes be more fluent because of it.

See this [source](#), and this [one](#).

## **The Verbal Feedback Technique (For Parents; Also called The Lidcombe Program and the Response/Contingencies Approach)**

Our brains (especially children's) are utterly incredible. They're like Playdoh, changing simply based on the outside feedback we get.

Only meant for children 3-6, making verbal responses about a child's speech can help their brain learn to speak more fluently without them consciously learning any intricate techniques. Their brains just do it on their own.

These are the five types of responses parents can give to their children based on their speech:

For fluent speech:

1. Praise them: "Good talking; no bumps!" "That was lovely, smooth talking" or "I'm loving your smooth, easy speech, man!" Be genuine and praise the child in their own special way they like.
2. Ask them to evaluate their own speech: "Was that smooth?" "Were there any bumps there?"
3. Simply acknowledge stutter-free speech: "That was smooth," "No bumps," "Smooth again." This is a matter-of-fact statement and not a positive comment.

Most comments should be these ones; ones made for fluent speech. You can also include some (very rarely though) for unambiguous, overtly stuttered speech:

1. First, simply acknowledge the stutter: "A little bumpy there," "That word got stuck."
2. Ask for self-correction: "Can you say that again smoothly?" "Try that one again." This should be the most rare response given and if your child reacts in any way negatively to it, cut it out.

These responses help first to normalize stuttering and make it something that gets talked about, which is rare in our culture.

Then they help to encourage brain change towards fluent speech by providing positive reinforcement for it in everyday life.

See [here](#) and [here](#). Oh and [here](#).

### **The Syllable-Timed Speech Technique (Also called the Westmead Program and the Robot Speech Technique)**

Syllable timed speech is a technique that, when practiced every day, can help children decrease their stuttering by 96%. It capitalized on rhythm's ability to induce fluent speech.

How to do it:

- Start by looking at pictures with your child and talk about what you see.
- As both of you talk, say one syllable at a time, breaking up your words into syllables and putting a boundary after every one:
  - So instead of talking like this...
  - Talk.like.this,  
break.ing.each.word.up.in.to.its.syll.a.bles.and.putt.ing.boun  
d.aries.a.round.each.one.

You might think this would make you sound very strange and it does feel slightly weird at first, but you make it sound more normal if you use your normal tone of voice and speak at your normal speed, simply adding definite boundaries around each syllable.

Once your child can do this looking at pictures as a guide, start using Robot Speech in everyday conversation.

Use this kind of speech in special practice sessions 5-10 minutes long about five times a day and encourage your child to use it outside of those times if they like.

The [Phase II clinical trials](#) found that children (aged 3-12 years old) who practiced syllable timed speech in conversation for just 5-10 minutes four to six times per day for 9-12 months reduces their stuttering by 96%.

The same kind of results haven't been seen in adults, though, likely because their brain's speech systems are already hard-wired and not as easy to change as children's.

And there you have it. Four incredible stuttering therapy techniques for preschool children who stutter!