

FLUENCY



What is fluency?

Fluency is the smooth, easy production of **speech**.

Fluent speech is made without any effort. It is relaxed and flowing.

We all have interruptions to the smooth flow of speech

All of us have some interruptions to our speech when we talk. During conversation most of us accidentally repeat words or syllables. We might also make some speech sounds longer. These features can break up the rhythm of speech. A bit of this is normal. All of us might experience some of the following:

- **repetitions** – e.g. *the boy has...has...has...has it*
- **prolongations** – e.g. *wwwwww-what is it?*
- **hesitations** – e.g. *and then I went...err...umm...err...home to see my mum*

Repetitions, prolongations and hesitations might increase if we are worried or tired. They might happen because we have forgotten what we wanted to say. Or we might be trying to find the right words to say what we mean. All of these things can create normal interruptions. No one is perfectly fluent all of the time – we are all sometimes **dysfluent**.

How much dysfluency is OK?

Some dysfluency is expected in everyone. But for some people the number of involuntary interruptions can be too much. There might be so many that they make it hard to talk properly. In this case, the person has a **stutter**.

As well as repetitions, prolongations and hesitations, people who stutter might also show:

- **blocks** – This is when two articulators (lips, teeth, tongue, palate) come together too strongly and the speaker cannot separate them. For example, when the two lips come together to form the sound 'b', instead of opening the lips quickly, the person cannot part them. A lot of tension builds up in the muscles. In severe cases a person might be stuck in a block for up to 10 seconds.

Is fluency called anything else?

- Fluency is not usually called anything else. But dysfluency or stuttering is often called **stammering**.

What can be done to help?

Help and advice on how to reduce stuttering is available for people of any age. Different types of help are available. But they are not all suitable for everyone. For this reason **we recommend assessment by a qualified speech therapist**.