

National Stuttering Association

“Changing the lives of people who stutter”

When a young child begins to stutter, it can be a frightening experience for the entire family. Fortunately, there are many ways you and others can help.

Working with leading stuttering specialists, the NSA has prepared this “Top 10” list of steps you can take to support your young child through this important time.

By following these recommendations, you will build a solid foundation for making good decisions about your child’s speech and language skills, and you give your child the best opportunity for improving his or her fluency and communication.

As you try these suggestions, remember that **you and your child do not have to face stuttering alone**. The NSA is here to help!

The **NSA** is the largest self-help and support organization in the world for children and adults who stutter and their families. Through our **NSAKids** program, we have dedicated ourselves to providing parents and others with the knowledge, understanding, and hope they need to support children’s success in their speech and throughout their lives.



Here are just a few NSA resources for preschool children and their families

Young Children Who Stutter: Information and Support for Parents. Our 60-page booklet provides detailed guidance about how you can help your child who stutters. This is often the “first step” for parents who are concerned about their children’s speech.

CARE Newsletter. *Connections, Advocacy, Resources, and Education* for parents of young children who stutter. Subscribe now!

Parent Support Chain. Connect with other parents who have faced the challenge of being the parent of a child who stutters.

Ask the Expert. Have a question about your child’s stuttering? Call **800 We Stutter** or email **AskTheExpert@WeStutter.org** to get help from top stuttering specialists and leaders in the stuttering self-help community.

With the NSA’s many outreach programs for young children who stutter and their families, **you are not alone**. Contact us today!

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Please support the NSA with your time and tax-deductible donations.

The National Stuttering Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Since 1977, we have dedicated ourselves to providing hope, dignity, support, education, and empowerment to children and adults who stutter, their families, and the professional community.

“TOP 10” Ways To Help Young Children Who Stutter (Ages 2-6)

There Are Many Ways Parents Can Help Young Children Who Stutter

These are the NSA’s “TOP 10”



National Stuttering Association
Changing the lives of people who stutter

There are many things you can do to help your child! These are just our “Top 10!”

For even more helpful ideas, call us at **800 We Stutter** or go to **www.WeStutter.org**

You can help your child...
...the NSA is here to help you

1. Learn about stuttering.

Getting the facts about stuttering can help you make good decisions for your child. The NSA has partnered with leading stuttering specialists to provide the most up-to-date information about stuttering research and treatment. The more you know, the more you can help.

2. Seek the advice of a specialist.

If you are worried about your child’s speech, contact a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in the treatment of children who stutter. Do not wait to see if your child will simply “outgrow” the stuttering. The sooner you get an evaluation, the sooner you can help your child. If you need help locating a specialist, contact the NSA and we can help you find someone in your area.

3. Respond to your child’s stuttering in an open, supportive way.

Many parents have been told not to draw attention to stuttering, fearing this will make it worse. Today, we know this is not true—talking about stuttering will *not* make your child stutter more. In fact, it can even help! View stuttering just like any other difficulty your child may have when learning a complex skill (like learning to skip or ride a bicycle) and treat stuttering in the same positive, patient, and supportive manner.

4. Give yourself a break.

Despite what you may have heard, *parents do NOT cause stuttering*. In fact, by learning more about stuttering now, you are taking positive steps to help your child improve his speech and communication. Your proactive response is supporting your child’s success.

5. Listen to your child.

Listen to the *message* your child is trying to communicate, not the stuttering. You can show your child that you are listening by not finishing sentences, filling in words, or giving simplistic advice such as “relax, slow down, and take a breath.” Encourage your child’s development of healthy communication skills by showing him that **what** he says is more important than **how** he says it. Reflect what you have heard back to him so he knows that he is understood.

6. Reduce communication demands.

As your child develops more advanced speech and language skills, she will experience many demands on her speaking abilities. Reducing the amount of “demand” speech (“tell grandma what you did today”) can decrease the pressures she experiences and help her communicate successfully, even when she is stuttering.

7. Model Good Communication.

You provide an important role model for your child’s communication abilities. You can use a communication style that is rushed, hurried, or intense—or, you can use an easier, smoother, more relaxed way of talking. Using pauses can help your child learn to speak in a relaxed, unhurried manner. When children experience these easier interactions, they feel less pressure to “keep up.” This can help to reduce the tension they feel in their speech.

8. Decrease Time Pressure.

Time pressure is the feeling that we have to act or speak quickly. Too much time pressure makes it harder to do the things we want to do.

You can reduce time pressure for your child by reducing interruptions and encouraging good turn-taking in your home environment. Allowing pauses and silence during conversation will help you can create an easier, more supportive communication environment for your child.

9. Be patient and learn in small steps.

Remember that these strategies take time to learn. Do not feel discouraged if you find them hard at first. You will receive specific training about how to make these and other changes as you partner with a stuttering specialist.

10. Get Connected.

The National Stuttering Association (NSA) is dedicated to providing hope, empowerment, and support for you and your child. Through the NSA, you will become part of a community of people who understand stuttering and how to help people who stutter. The greatest gift you can give yourself and your child is the knowledge that you are not alone in dealing with stuttering!

For even more information on how you can help your child, read our comprehensive booklet, ***Young Children Who Stutter: Information and Support for Parents***. This resource describes the early signs of stuttering, provides an overview of what to expect in therapy, and explains how parents can help their child at home. It also provides the support parents need to be helpful partners in the therapy process and emphasizes the importance of early intervention and support for young children who stutter.