



Children's Speech and Language Therapy Special Time Advice



What is it?

'Special Time' is a therapy activity that can help children who stammer.

It helps them feel heard and valued as communicators.

It works best if you do Special Time every day for 5 minutes.

How to do it

1. Let your child choose an activity, toy, or game. Activities such as building with blocks, playing with dolls or action figures, cars or train sets, or arts and crafts are great options for Special Time. Avoid activities such as reading a book, using a computer or tablet, watching TV, or lively outdoor games.
2. Find a quiet room where you can play with your child on their own. Turn off any background noise (e.g. TV, YouTube, radio) so that your child can hear you easily.
3. Play with your child for 5 minutes.
4. Follow your child's lead. Try to avoid telling them how to play and let them choose how much talking they want to do. In some Special Time sessions, your child may want to talk a lot, in others they may be happy to play quietly. It's okay for Special Time to be a quiet time - you don't need to fill the silences.
5. Listen to what your child says and respond. Think about your own talking. Try pausing, slow talking, and balancing your use of questions and comments. Remember to wait for your child to finish talking and avoid interrupting them.
6. At the end of the 5 minutes, think about what happened during Special Time. How easy was it for you? What did you change? Did you and your child enjoy Special Time? What didn't help the communication between you?
7. Find a regular time to do Special Time. It helps when it is part of your routine.



With **all of us** in mind.

Why is it helpful?

- Allowing your child to take the lead and set the pace of conversation shows them that there is no pressure to talk, and that you enjoy spending time with them regardless of whether they are chatty or quiet, stammering or not.
- Listening to your child and responding to what they are saying helps you be present in the moment, connect with your child, and shows that you value their communication.
- When adults pause more and slow down their talking, it helps by giving more time and space for stammering, it lets the child know that their words are important and valued and keeps Special Time calm and relaxed. Remember – it's not helpful to tell your child to slow down.
- Most adults naturally use a lot of questions when they are playing with a child. However, balancing your comments and questions is helpful because comments do not require an immediate answer and they give your child more time to respond and stammer.
- Following your child's lead shows them that you are listening to them and interested in the things they like doing. It makes them feel special. Your child is more likely to communicate about something that interests them.
- The aim of Special Time is for your child to enjoy communicating and having conversations, regardless of whether they are stammering or not. We want to give them the message that we care about what they are saying, not how they are saying it.

Some more helpful tips:

- Leave pauses in case your child would like to copy what you have said or make their own comment.
- Whenever possible, get down to your child's level so that they can see your face.
- Enjoy your time together.