

Dysarthria

Definition, strategies and exercises



What is Dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder caused by muscle weakness. This can make it difficult for people to understand what you are saying.

We use many muscles when talking including:

- Face
- Lips
- Tongue
- Breathing muscles

If any of these muscles are weak it can make it difficult to communicate verbally.

Dysarthria is caused by damage to areas of the brain that control motor aspects of speech. Dysarthria can vary from being mild to severe; causing the individual great difficulty when trying to communicate verbally.

Signs of dysarthria may include:

- Slurred speech
- Speaking slowly
- Speaking too fast
- Effortful speech
- Face, lips and tongue movements being too weak to articulate sounds

This pack has been provided by your Speech and Language Therapist and is designed to provide you with strategies to help you when communicating and exercises for you to follow independently. Your Speech and Language Therapist will advise you what exercises to do.

Tips to improve the clarity of your speech

Before you talk, you should:

- ✓ Talk in a quiet place e.g. turn off the TV or radio
- ✓ Make sure you have your listener's full attention e.g. call them
- ✓ Ensure you speak face to face with your listener
- ✓ Plan what you wish to say – try to keep it brief and to-the- point
- ✓ Make sure that are sat up. This will allow you to breathe properly

When you talk, ensure that you:

- ✓ Take a deep breath before talking and try not to say too much in one breath
- ✓ Slow down to give your tongue , lips, jaws and/or soft palate extra time to form each sound clearly
- ✓ Pause regularly and certainly between each sentence. This will also help stop words running together and give you time to breathe
- ✓ Concentrate and put extra effort into each articulation. You may need to exaggerate every movement to make your speech sound clear.
- ✓ Say the end and beginning of words very carefully to stop them from running into each other
- ✓ Split longer words up into syllables to make sure each part is said clearly, e.g. improvement – 'im-prove-ment'
- ✓ Speak up! Many people have unclear speech because it is too quiet. Project your voice!
- ✓ Watch your listener to see if they understand. Encourage him/her to tell you if they haven't understood.
- ✓ Practice problem words and phrases.

If you are still struggling to get your message across, try to:

- ✓ Repeat it really focusing upon the strategies above
- ✓ Only repeat the part that wasn't understood
- ✓ Use alternative methods to speech e.g. miming, gesture, pointing, writing it down, spelling it out or drawing.

Slowing down your rate of talking

1) Why might it be helpful for me to talk more slowly and to make use of
Pauses in my talking?

- It gives me more time to think and plan what I'm trying to say.
- It makes my speech easier for other people to understand.
- It gives me time to go at my own pace.
- It encourages other people e.g. my children, to take their time, talk more slowly and use pauses.

2) What do I need to 'do more of' or 'do differently' in order to talk slowly and make use of pauses?

- Listen to how other people talk when they are relaxed and calm.
- Try to go at about the same rate or even a little more slowly.
- Try to pause before you say something as well as between sentences.
- You may find it helpful to tape-record yourself to listen to how slowly you are both speaking. You can then decide whether you need to make any changes.
- Even though you are talking slowly, try to keep it sounding interesting and as natural as possible. Try not to be 'choppy' or to speak like a robot.
- Remember that talking slowly or pausing more may feel rather strange to begin with - it takes practise. So set yourself little targets e.g. for the next five minutes try to talk more slowly or decide to ask someone a question more slowly.

Use slow talking when it suits you. If you feel like your body is a bit tense, sigh or give yourself a few minutes to have time out if you can, and focus on your breathing.

Remember...



Strategies when using the telephone:

Like many speaking situations, practice and feeling familiar with a task builds confidence. A few coping strategies that have worked for other people with dysarthria are listed below, and you will probably be able to add to the list:

1. Preparation:
 - Write and/or rehearse the opening lines of an important call. Write down opening lines and key points to get across.
 - Have alternative first words in mind in case you don't get through to who you were expecting.
2. Start off simply: Begin with easy calls before making more difficult ones. Phone a friend/family member beforehand to reduce anxiety. Make a list of calls and work your way up to the hardest.
3. Practice simple calls: Making enquiries, appointments and cancellations gives you extra practice and can help to reduce anxiety.
4. Mental Focus:
 - Saying the numbers slowly and deliberately as you dial them can give you a moment's breathing space and help you to start the call more confidently.
 - Concentrate on what you want to say rather than thinking about your speech being unclear.
5. Necessity: Everyone has to push through their fears sometimes. Just picking up the phone and making a call can boost self-confidence.
6. Desensitisation: What other people might think of your speech is their business. Your business is to make the calls you need to.
7. Saying you have dysarthria: Some people find it helps to tell the other person that they have dysarthria, and to just wait for them to finish what they are saying. Letting other people know can reduce your anxiety.
8. Confidence: If it goes well, gain confidence by making other calls. Don't keep putting it off - it'll become more stressful.

Receiving calls

- Don't rush to the phone. Let it ring a few times and take a breath.

- Have first words ready.
- If within earshot of others, concentrate solely on the call.
- If using a technique, looking at a sticker in a handy place can remind you to use it.

Every-day words and phrases

Below are some everyday words and phrases. Have a go at saying each of the phrases. Remember to take a deep breath in before you speak, slow down your speech rate, take regular pauses and break longer words and sentences down into chunks. There is a space at the end of this section to write in some words and phrases that you use in day to day life. You can then practice these words and phrases.

- Hello
- Good morning
- Goodbye
- Goodnight
- See you later
- Take care
- You're welcome

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Not sure
- Never mind
- Leave it

- Please
- Thank you
- Thanks
- Cheers
- Ta

- How are you?
- Very well
- Fine thanks
- Not too bad
- Getting better

- Come here

- Sit down
- Bring it here
- Put it there
- On the table
- Can you get me_____?

- Who's that?
- Who's on the phone?
- What's their name?
- Do you know him/her?
- What's on TV?
- Where's the remote?
- Where's my phone?
- Where's my charger

- Let's go
- I'm ready
- Wait a minute
- It's time to go

People and plans

- Who's coming today?
- What time are they coming?
- When are they coming back?
- What are we doing today?
- Get my hair done/ have a shave
- Go out for a walk
- I need to go to Tesco/Morrisons/Sainsburys/Asda/Lidl/Aldi
- Have lunch in town
- I need to go shopping
- Where are you going?

Opinions

- Bad idea
- Good idea
- Great
- I don't like that
- I have another idea
- I like that
- Silly

Food

- Do you want a drink?
- Get a takeaway
- Give me a hand in the kitchen
- Go out for a meal
- I want to cook
- Make a drink
- Make a snack
- Make lunch
- Make tea
- Need to buy ingredients
- What do you want to have?
- Where shall we go?
- A glass of water
- A cup of tea

Conversation

- Have you seen anything good on TV?
- How are the kids?
- How did it go?
- Did you see last night's EastEnders/Emmerdale/Corrie?
- Did you see the news?
- What have you been up to?
- What's new?
- How was your day?
- Let's meet up soon
- Let's go for a drink
- Did you have a nice holiday?
- You're joking
- Sorry to hear that
- See you soon

Words and phrases that you use in daily life

Think of some words and phrases that you would use in your day to day life. They can be written down on the dotted lines below and then practice each of them.

Words

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Phrases

Multisyllabic Words

Below is a list of multisyllabic words. These are words that have more than one syllable. Have a go at saying each of the words. Remember to take a deep breath in before speaking and take your time.

2 Syllables

Baby

Bedtime

Bedroom

Paper

Pencil

People

Sleeping

Bus stop

Towel

Dinner

Doctor

Toilet

3 Syllables

Another

Video

Butterfly

Vitamin

Lemonade

Piano

Potato

Telephone

Hospital

Magazine

Newspaper

Banana

4 Syllables

Anybody

Discovery

Vegetable

Supermarket

Television

Historical

Cauliflower

Understanding

Caterpillar


Conversation

January

America


Speech Self-rating Scale – starting this exercise pack

Use the self-rating scale below to rate your speech.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Clear speech	Mumbling -Not clear at all				Clear half the time					Really clear
Speed of speech	Very fast and hard to understand				Regular speed with some fast bits					Regular speed. Easy to understand
 Volume	Quiet all the time				Loud enough half the time					Loud enough all the time
Breathing for speech	Running out of air when talking				Runs out of air half the time					Has enough breath to speak loud and clear

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Functional communication planner

On this page you can plan how you are going to practise your talking in everyday situations. Have a think about when, where, and who with you are going to practise your talking. For example you could practise asking for items in the supermarket.



Practising your talking in everyday situations

When? _____

Where? _____

What? _____

Who with? _____

How did it go?

My speech/ total communication/ getting my message across



Awful



Not very good



Good



Really good



Brilliant

My confidence



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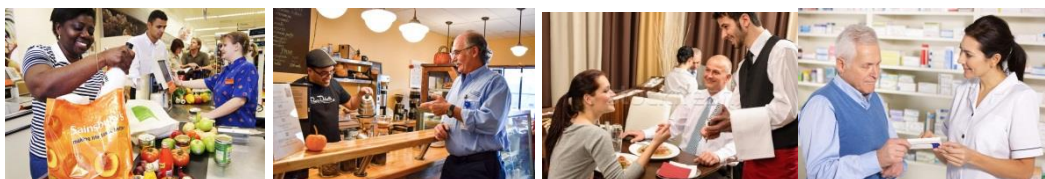
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