

Speech-Language Pathology



Central
Health

- 12. Use body language to help convey your thoughts.** Using gestures, pointing, facial expressions, etc. helps your communication partner pick up on what you are trying to say when your speech is not clear during a conversation.
- 13. Rephrase your message if your communication partner does not understand you.** Rewording your message can improve your chances of being understood.
- 14. Use an alternate system to communicate if your speech is difficult to understand.** Using an alternate system to communicate (writing on a note pad, pointing to letters on an alphabet board, using an electronic device, etc.) provides a backup for your speech when it is not at its best.
- 15. Appreciate your communication partner's efforts.** Being patient with your communication partner lets them know you understand they are trying to understand your message.
- 16. Be patient with yourself.** Understanding it is difficult to speak when you have dysarthria helps you be easier on yourself. Once you use strategies that work well for you, you will be better able to communicate with others.



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Conversational Strategies for a Person with Dysarthria



What is dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a speech disorder characterized by weakness or paralysis of the speech mechanism: the lips, tongue, soft palate, and larynx (voice box).

What are possible symptoms of *dysarthria*?

- Facial weakness (facial droop)
- Slurred speech
- Voice volume too loud or too soft, weak or breathy voice
- Changed pitch
- Harsh or hoarse sounding voice
- Nasal sounding voice
- Monotonous voice

Strategies that may help your communication:

- 1. Gain eye contact with your communication partner before speaking.** Asking your communication partner to look at you when you are speaking so they can see clues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, etc.) will help them better understand you.
- 2. Avoid speaking when you are tired.** Waiting until you feel rested to have long conversations decreases the chances that you will have trouble speaking.
- 3. Speak in a quiet environment.** Speaking in a quieter environment makes it easier for your conversation partner to understand what you are saying.
- 4. Take your time while speaking.** Slowing down your speech gives your lips, tongue and facial muscles more time to make the necessary movements for clearer speech.
- 5. Exaggerate your speech movements.** Moving your lips, tongue, etc. in an exaggerated way helps make your speech sound clearer.
- 6. Speak louder.** Speaking louder may help your conversation partner hear your message better.
- 7. Take natural pauses while speaking.** Pausing slows down your rate of speech and allows you to take in more air for a louder volume.
- 8. Keep your face free from distractions.** Keeping your hands away from your face and avoiding actions that produce extra facial movement (chewing gum) limits distractions for your communication partner.
- 9. Use body language to convey turn taking.** Using hand signals, gestures, or facial expressions helps let your conversation partner know you need more time to respond or that you have more to say.
- 10. Allow yourself time for a conversation.** Waiting to begin a conversation until you are not pressed for time will help you use your communication strategies more effectively.
- 11. Avoid repeating words and phrases.** Waiting until your communication partner tells you that they are unsure of what you said will limit the number of times you need to repeat your message.