

Speech Impairments

DESCRIPTION AND FACTS:

Speech impairments range from problems with articulation or voice strength to inability to speak. They include stuttering (repetition, blocks, or prolongations occasionally accompanied by distorted movements and facial expressions), chronic hoarseness (dysphonia), difficulty in evoking an appropriate word or term (normal aphasia), and esophageal speech (resulting from a laryngectomy).

POSSIBLE BARRIERS:

- Decreased speed of speech
- Decreased self-esteem
- Decreased clarity of message being communicated.

INTERACTION WITH AN INDIVIDUAL WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS:

1. Use more face-to-face interaction
2. Be patient and let the person finish what he or she is saying

TEACHING A STUDENT WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS:

The following are some guidelines to use for situations involving students with speech impairments.

1. A student with impaired speech may communicate more slowly. Students need to have an **equal chance to voice their reactions or questions** even if it means allowing extra time. Sometimes the student may need extra encouragement to participate in class.
2. It is also important to **overcome the urge to interrupt** or try to complete the student's train of thought. An instructor trying to anticipate the questions being asked may embarrass the student if the completion of the sentence was not the question or point being made.
3. In situations where the words or phrases the person is using are not understood, panic only gets in the way of concentrating on what the person is trying to relay. Don't be hesitant to **ask for repetition of words or phrases**; students with speech impairments would much rather repeat a message in order to communicate than have someone pretend to understand what they are saying. Summarizing the message is often a helpful way of checking with the student as to whether you understood the message.
4. With **increased** contact with the student, your ability to understand the student's speech will improve.
5. Do **communicate an attitude of acceptance and encouragement** to reduce the discomfort and increase the confidence of the student.
6. Oral presentations may be of concern to the student and the instructor. Some students may prefer to **have another person voice their presentations**; others prefer to do it for themselves. Instructors should feel free to openly discuss these concerns with the student.