

Slow Stretched Speech

Initially, students learn to use and integrate their fluency-enhancing skills while speaking at a greatly reduced rate called Slow Stretched Speech.

This strategy involves prolonging individual syllables to approximately ten times their normal duration. Consequently, the force and acceleration of speech muscle movements is significantly decreased.



Using slower speech improves the timing of articulatory movements and the coordination of the respiratory, phonatory, and articulatory systems (Kully & Boberg, 1991; Ramig & Dodge, 2005; Runyan & Runyan, 1993; Wall & Myers, 1995).

Slow Stretched Speech involves stretching out all vowels and certain consonant sounds (m, n, l, r, w, y, v, voiced th, z and j). These particular consonants are “stretchable” insofar as they can be stretched in a palpable, stable way. This stretching helps students to “hold on to” the sounds they are producing and stay “grounded” in their speech.

Slow Stretched Speech increases control of speech muscle movements, enhances kinesthetic feedback, and heightens students’ awareness of *how* they are producing sounds in a relaxed, steady manner (Perkins, 1992).

Slow Stretched Speech can be taught in the following way:

1. Explain the rationale (described above and on pages 24–25 of the Student Workbook).
2. Acknowledge that Slow Stretched Speech sounds unusual, and assure students that they will not be using it in any speaking situations outside the therapy room.

- » Highlight the fact that when we learn new physical behaviors, it often helps to do so in slow motion. You may give examples (sports, martial arts, dance etc.) of skills that are initially taught at a reduced rate and then gradually sped up.
3. Review the fact that as students use Slow Stretched Speech, they will be stretching out all vowels and certain consonant sounds (m, n, l, r, w, y, v, voiced th, z and j).
 4. Tell students that they will be practicing Slow Stretched Speech with one syllable words.
 5. Preview steps 1–3 of “How to practice Slow Stretched Speech” (see page 26 of the Student Workbook).

» Be sure to model production of the “bell curve.” That is, start your voice just above a whisper, gradually increase your volume to a normal loudness level, and then move back to just above a whisper
 6. Model Slow Stretched Speech using the words on that same page.

» Each of these one-syllable words should be prolonged for approximately two seconds.

» The first stretchable sound should be stretched for the first second, and the remaining stretchable sounds in the word should be stretched for the second second.
 7. Reassure students that they will not be using this speech in public. Tell them that it will be sped up later, and the stretches will be produced much more quickly.
 8. For additional practice, have students use Slow Stretched Speech on the Smooth Movement Words following your model (see pages 27–28 of the Student Workbook).

» Remind students to pay close attention to the physical feeling as they produce words in this way.