

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP YOUR CHILD'S ABILITY TO TAKE TURNS

Often in families:

- Everybody talks at once
- People interrupt each other
- No one listens
- One person does all the talking
- Everyone is afraid to interrupt the stammering child

When this happens:

- People are not taking turns
- Everyone is competing for a time to talk

Competing for a time to talk may make things difficult for the child who stammers:

- **They feel that they must speak quickly to get a turn in conversation**
- **They have less time to think of what they want to say**
- **They have to cope with people interrupting him and then may interrupt others**

Some speech situations can also cause more "speech anxiety" than others.

These may include:

- Interrupting the child when speaking
- Not listening to the child when speaking
- Competition for the "conversation floor" e.g. with friends, brothers, sisters

Therefore, it is important to turn-take in conversations and practise turn-taking. This is so your child learns to speak at the right time and does not expect everyone to stop and listen to everything they say.

It is first necessary for parents to understand the present turn-taking system operating in the family. So you can carry out an observation exercise to find out:

- who does the most talking
- who does the most listening
- who does the most interrupting

How can I improve turn-taking?

- ❖ Watch! Listen! Wait! To ensure that your child has finished speaking before you start to talk
- ❖ Count to two in your head before responding
- ❖ When your child speaks you, respond either verbally or non-verbally (e.g. smiling, nodding)

You can also practice turn-taking by engaging in turn-taking activities:

- ❖ Play the 'talking object' game
 - Let your child choose something to talk about (e.g. a favourite film, animal, hobby etc.)
 - Designate an object to be the 'talking object' (e.g. a spoon, a teddy etc.)

- Ensure that your child knows that as long as they are holding the object that it is their turn to speak and no one can interrupt them.
 - The turn is finished when the object is passed to the other person.
 - If your child interrupts you during your turn, remind them that they need to wait until they are holding the object to talk.
 - Finish the game before your child loses interest
- ❖ You can also play normal turn taking games (e.g. pop up pirate, snakes and ladders etc.) to ensure that your child understands turn taking – you can also include others (e.g. siblings) into this.

Ensure that you support turn-taking at home and at school.

For example,

If your child interrupts say ‘wait a second I am speaking to ...’

Make sure that you go back to your child straight away after you have finished speaking e.g. “I’m ready to talk now”

Model this with other family members and pupils in your child’s class, so that they do not think that it is just them.