

# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

STAMINA



## **About this Guide**

This guide is aimed at employees who stammer. STAMMA also provide a guide for employers that gives ideas for reasonable adjustments from their perspective. These two guides differ slightly. Share either one with your manager to start a conversation about reasonable adjustments.

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# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

If you stammer, you can ask your employer to make adjustments that can help you in your job. These are known as 'reasonable adjustments'. They are changes that organisations make to standard working practices so that they're suitable for people who stammer.

Reasonable adjustments aren't just nice to have. Employers have a legal duty to make them. Reasonable adjustments allow you to get on in your job so that stammering isn't an issue. They help

you engage in all aspects of your job role fully and with confidence. They also allow your employer and colleagues to benefit from your expertise and skills.

## Request Adjustments

This document lists some examples of reasonable adjustments you can ask for. We set out typical workplace challenges you might be dealing with and give ideas for reasonable adjustments that could be useful. See which ones resonate with

you and pick out adjustments that would suit you.

Everyone is different so not all the ideas will be relevant to you, and it's not an exhaustive list. This is a starting point so you can think about what works best for you. It can help you discuss with your employer, explore what's possible and create an environment where you can thrive. Making these changes can also contribute to a better workplace for your colleagues.

# INTRODUCTIONS & ICEBREAKERS

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to enjoy getting involved in introductions and ice-breakers.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want introductions to feel like a gateway to getting to know other people, rather than a barrier.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to feel confident about introducing myself to others. This will help me establish good working relationships.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want other team members to feel confident and comfortable when they hear me stammer.</p>	<p>I get really worried about making introductions or participating in icebreakers.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I can't listen to anyone else during introductions because I'm so focused on my speech and how I'm going to say what I need to say.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I avoid the beginning of meetings so I don't have to introduce myself.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>It takes people by surprise when I first stammer and they don't know how to respond.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Sometimes I like to go first during introductions to 'get it over with', but not always.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agree in advance when my turn will be when group introductions are being made.</li> <li>▪ The meeting's Chair making all the introductions.</li> <li>▪ Be introduced rather than introducing myself.</li> <li>▪ Use name badges rather than verbal introductions for in-person meetings.</li> <li>▪ Use an on-screen background for video calls that displays my name and lets others know I stammer.</li> <li>▪ Use on-screen names rather than verbal introductions during video calls.</li> <li>▪ Use a pre-recorded greeting and introduction when working on the telephone.</li> </ul>

# USING THE PHONE

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to enjoy using the phone at work.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to carry out phone-related tasks to the best of my ability.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to use alternative means of communication to complete tasks when phone calls feel too difficult.</p>	<p>I get really worried about making work-related phone calls.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I have to say specific words or phrases when using the phone. Some of those words are particularly difficult for me to say.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm uncomfortable at my colleagues 'listening in' when I'm stammering on the phone.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>It's harder for me to speak in environments with lots of background noise.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>When I stammer, especially at the start of a call, the person on the other end sometimes hangs up. They think there's a bad line or that there is no one there.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A quieter space to make phone calls.</li> <li>▪ Permission to vary the standard script to accommodate word-switching.</li> <li>▪ Pre-arranged times for calls so that both people know who's calling and what it's about.</li> <li>▪ Use a pre-recorded greeting and introduction when working on the phone.</li> <li>▪ Use the Relay UK service for phone calls.</li> <li>▪ Flexible options to meet face-to-face, via video call or use emails instead of using the phone.</li> </ul>

# INTERCOMS & RADIOS

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to access work-related locations easily.</p>	<p>I'm often reluctant to use intercoms to gain access to a work area because I find it more difficult to speak in this situation.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Sometimes the person on reception does not realise that silences are due to me stammering. They think there is no-one there and I can't access the work area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organisation to use intercoms with video as well as audio function, so that reception can see someone is speaking or trying to speak.</li> <li>▪ Flexibility to opt out of using intercoms.</li> <li>▪ Alternative options to access a building.</li> </ul>
<p>I want to communicate with my team effectively using the radio.</p>	<p>I get really worried about using the radio.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>People interrupt me when I stammer on the radio.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of specific callsigns on group radio channels so colleagues know I need more time to talk.</li> <li>▪ Flexibility to use alternative communication channels.</li> </ul>

# CONTRIBUTING TO MEETINGS

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to participate actively in meetings. I want to make contributions and be able to concentrate on what my colleagues are saying.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to contribute my opinion, knowledge, and skills.</p>	<p>I get really worried about contributing in meetings.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>It's difficult to break in to fast-moving discussions.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Colleagues interrupt and speak over me when I stammer.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm not comfortable with my colleagues hearing me stammer so I say less than I want to.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm so focused on my speech and how I'm going to say what I want to say that I don't always concentrate on what others are saying.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The physical effort involved with speaking means I'm exhausted after meetings. I therefore sometimes "ration" my contributions.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I don't like 'seeing' myself stammer on the screen in online meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stammered speech is welcomed and respected within meetings.</li> <li>▪ Good management of turn-taking within meetings so that space is made for everyone.</li> <li>▪ Ask people to signal when they wish to speak rather than verbally jumping in.</li> <li>▪ In online meetings, the option to use the chat function to support, or use instead of, speech. Typed contributions to be given equal weight with spoken contributions.</li> <li>▪ Use visual and written materials as well as or instead of speech. This information to be valued as much as talking.</li> <li>▪ Agendas in advance so that I can let the Chair know which topics I wish to speak on.</li> <li>▪ The option to contribute in writing before or after meetings.</li> <li>▪ In online meetings, a screen background displaying my name, so people know I stammer.</li> <li>▪ Use the 'hide self' function during online meetings so I don't see myself stammer.</li> </ul>

# PRESENTING

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to enjoy presenting.</p>	<p>I really worry about presenting.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I stammer more when I'm feeling nervous. I'm nervous when presenting and this means I deal with much more stammering than is typical for me.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm concerned I will be judged on how I talk rather than on what I'm saying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stammered speech is welcomed and respected in presentations. Recognition that I can be a good presenter AND stammer.</li> <li>▪ Flexibility around the format of presentations, including the ability to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ present with a colleague or in a group</li> <li>▪ use visual or written resources as well as speaking.</li> <li>▪ pre-record all or part of the presentation</li> <li>▪ share information using an alternative mode of communication.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Support from employer to attend sessions to develop confidence and presentation skills.</li> </ul>

# INTERVIEWING

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to get the job.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to convey my skills, attributes, and experience during interviews.</p>	<p>I get really worried before an interview.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I worry that I will be judged on how I am speaking rather than what I am saying.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I stammer more when I'm feeling nervous. I'm nervous during interviews, so I stammer more than typical for me.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm concerned the interviewers may think I can't do the job because I stammer.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The pressure to respond quickly makes it more difficult for me to speak.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I need to say very specific words or phrases to demonstrate my knowledge but those are words I tend to stammer on a lot.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I get so caught up in dealing with stammering that I forget the question or lose focus when</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stammered speech to be welcomed and respected within interviews.</li> <li>▪ Choice of face-to-face, online or phone interview.</li> <li>▪ Interviewers to receive, in advance, information about stammering, what they might see and hear, and how I work through moments of stammering.</li> <li>▪ Interview questions to be sent out in advance.</li> <li>▪ Allowed to flex between written and spoken responses.</li> <li>▪ Allowed to bring notes into the interview.</li> </ul>

	<p>answering.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I swap words to avoid stammering but that means my answers aren't always as focused as they could be.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I tend to say less if I'm stammering a lot which might mean my responses aren't detailed enough.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>If I'm stammering a lot, it's exhausting and it's difficult to maintain energy throughout the interview.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I worry that the interviewer will judge me negatively if I break eye contact when I stammer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allowed to make notes before responding to the question.</li> <li>▪ Allowed to refer to notes in an interview.</li> <li>▪ The option to use visual/written resources as well as speech.</li> <li>▪ Additional time, no time limit, or a slowed pace.</li> <li>▪ Interviewer to check that I've said everything I want to say following each question.</li> <li>▪ Allowed to provide further written responses in the 10 minutes following the interview.</li> </ul>
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## NAVIGATING CONFLICT

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to feel confident I can address difficult or emotional issues with colleagues should they arise.</p>	<p>I sometimes find speaking harder when there is conflict, or in emotionally-charged situations.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I tend to get interrupted and talked over in emotionally-charged situations.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>People highlight my stammering in emotionally-charged situations which makes me feel very uncomfortable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stammered speech is valued and respected within discussions. This is how I talk.</li> <li>▪ Good management of turn-taking in structured discussions around conflict.</li> <li>▪ Option to use Relay UK service or written communication channels to navigate conflict.</li> <li>▪ A trusted manager or colleague to raise concerns with. Someone I can feed back to about communication, work issues, and general work culture.</li> </ul>

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to be able to chat with my colleagues without worrying.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to feel part of the team.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to feel that my contributions are welcome and valued.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want my colleagues to understand and make space for stammering.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to work for an inclusive company that can benefit from all that diversity brings.</p>	<p>I feel excluded from the group.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Sometimes colleagues don't understand what it's like to stammer. I can be mistaken for being unsociable, nervous or incompetent.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I am sometimes reluctant to join in socially, especially with people I don't know. This is because I worry my work colleagues will be unkind when I stammer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training for colleagues on the skills that stammering can bring.</li> <li>▪ Training for colleagues on stammering and how to talk with colleagues, customers and service users who stammer.</li> </ul>

## WORKPLACE WELLBEING

Aims	Challenge	Suggested Adjustments
<p>I want to feel positive about my communication and work relationships. This helps me thrive and do my job to the best of my ability.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I want to help my employer become more inclusive. Being able to personalise my reasonable adjustments is part of that process.</p>	<p>If I want to pursue therapy or speaking courses, this may require time away from work.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'm worried my employer won't review my reasonable adjustments if my needs change over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The option to take disability leave to attend therapy or courses.</li> <li>▪ Regular reviews of reasonable adjustments.</li> <li>▪ Consider whether my reasonable adjustments could benefit other staff and become standard procedure.</li> </ul>

Help us help others. Tell us your thoughts about using this document. Let us know how you are using reasonable adjustments, and what we can do better. Or, if you get stuck and want support, give us a call.

Contact us at [employmentsupport@stamma.org](mailto:employmentsupport@stamma.org) or call our helpline on 0808 802 0002. The line is open Monday to Thursday, 10am-2pm, 4pm to 8pm. Calls to the line are free and confidential.

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**IT'S HOW WE TALK**