

Best speech therapy exercises are here for you to recover your speech and language.

Speech therapy exercises can enhance individuals' communication and language production skills, particularly following a neurological injury like a stroke. Different aspects of speech may be impacted depending on the area of the brain affected by the stroke. Personalized exercises can be provided by speech therapists to aid in the recovery of speech production abilities.

Performing speech therapy exercises in front of a mirror is frequently recommended for optimal results. The visual feedback from the mirror serves as both a source of motivation and a way for individuals to monitor their accuracy during the exercises.

Here are some of the best speech therapy exercises to try at home:

1. Tongue movements in and out

Extend your tongue as far as you can and maintain the position for 2 seconds, then retract it back. Hold for 2 seconds, and repeat this action. This exercise aids in teaching the tongue to execute coordinated movements, leading to enhanced speech production.

2. Lateral Tongue Movements

In this speech therapy exercise, open your mouth and guide your tongue to touch the right corner of your mouth. Maintain this position for 2 seconds, then move your tongue to touch the left corner of your mouth. Hold for 2 seconds, and repeat the process.

3. Vertical Tongue Movements

Begin by opening your mouth and extending your tongue. Next, move your tongue upwards towards your nose. Hold this position for 2 seconds, then guide your tongue downwards towards your chin. Hold for 2 seconds, and then repeat the sequence.

4. Smiles

The act of smiling involves many facial muscles. As such, smiling is a simple speech therapy exercise that can improve oral motor skills. Practice smiling in front of a mirror. Smile for 2 seconds, then relax, and repeat.

Note: Following a neurological injury such as stroke, many individuals may have trouble moving one side of their face. While practicing smiling in the mirror, try to make the smile as symmetric as possible.

5. Lip Puckers

Start with the mouth relaxed. Then, pucker the lips together as if kissing, holding this position for 2 seconds. Relax for 2 seconds, and repeat. For an extra challenge in motor precision and control, practice puckering as slowly as possible.

6. Consonant & Vowel Pairing Repetition

Begin by identifying the challenging consonants for speech. Subsequently, systematically combine each of these consonants with the five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) individually. For instance, individuals struggling with the r" sound can practice saying "ra, re, ri, ro, ru" repeatedly. For an added level of difficulty, attempt this exercise with all consonants.

7. Constructing Sentences

Individuals with neurologically-based coordination disorders such as apraxia of speech do not struggle with the cognitive aspects of language production. Instead, they encounter difficulties in coordinating the movements of their lips and tongue. Consequently, reading aloud can serve as a beneficial practice for those dealing with apraxia of speech. Although this exercise is also advantageous for individuals with aphasia, it may prove to be quite challenging during the initial phases of recovery.

Note: Start small by practicing only a sentence or two for short periods of time. Then, increase the number of sentences or time spent practicing for a further challenge.

8. Phonological Processing

The study of speech sound patterns is known as phonology. Engaging in speech therapy exercises that target phonology can aid individuals in enhancing their speech production abilities.

For this exercise, ask a family member or caregiver to state various words. Then guess how many syllables are in each word they say. Family members or caregiver should always give feedback as to whether the answer was correct or incorrect. The feedback is an essential part of what makes this exercise therapeutic.

9. Word Games

Playing word games can be a great way to integrate practicing speech therapy exercises into a fun, engaging activity. Although not all word games require verbalizing words, individuals can choose to simply work on the cognitive components of language or adapt the game to include speaking.

For example, games such as Boggle, Scrabble, or Bananagrams involve cognitive language skills, such as word finding and memory. Rather than simply creating words during these games, individuals could choose also to state each word made to practice speech production skills as well.

Games like Pictionary, 20 Questions, or Go Fish require individuals to speak throughout the game. This can be challenging initially, but is an excellent way to make practicing speech therapy exercises more fun. For those looking for an independent activity, games such as word searches or crossword puzzles can also be effective options to work on language skills.

10. Speech Therapy Exercise Apps

While the exercises above are a great place to start, they aren't tailored to an individual's unique needs. Certain speech therapy exercise apps can adapt to provide exercises appropriate for one's current abilities and challenges so that individuals can continue to improve.

11. Encouraging Vocal Well-being

Vocal hygiene refers to adopting beneficial practices that can uphold a robust and clear voice throughout your lifetime. Here's how you can begin today:

- Ensure adequate hydration by consuming 6-8 cups of water daily and reducing caffeine consumption.
- Take regular breaks to rest your voice - aim for 15 minutes of rest for every hour of use.
- Stay away from smoking, alcohol, and secondhand smoke to protect your voice.

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