



---

# Five Fun Activities to Practice Pausing with Children Who Stutter

Peter Reitzes, MA CCC-SLP

Brooklyn Public Schools

---

## Abstract

This is the second of two related papers focusing on the use of pausing. Pausing is a rate control speaking strategy that is used to decrease the frequency of stuttering. Pausing reduces the rate of speech by having speakers insert space between words without altering or distorting articulation. This article discusses five fun activities to use for practicing pausing with children who stutter.

---

## Introduction

Pausing, also known as phrasing or chunking, is a speaking strategy that focuses on reducing the rate of speech to reduce the frequency of stuttering (Reitzes, 2006a, 2006b). Pausing occurs between words, not within words. Each word should be said crisply without altering articulation. In general, it is recommended that people who stutter pause after the first word of a sentence and then after every one, two, three, four, or five words thereafter (Reitzes, 2006a, 2006b). For example, say aloud the following paragraph while pausing briefly, for a fraction of a second, at each comma:

Pausing, is used, to reduce, the, frequency of stuttering. Each, pause, should occur, between words, not within words. Each, word, needs to be said, crisply, without altering, or changing, articulation. When, using pausing, multisyllabic words, are not broken, into pieces, or syllables. For, example, do not say, "I, have, a new, tel,e,phone." Say, "I, have, a new, telephone."

The following activities focus on practicing pausing and are to be used with children who have already been introduced to pausing. For a full discussion of pausing, see Reitzes (2006a, 2006b). The activities presented in this paper may also be used to target a wide range of language goals including following directions; speaking in simple, complex and complete sentences; using new vocabulary; expressing objects within categories; understanding and expressing figurative language; and sequencing information.

The activities presented here are ideal for working with a combined group of students that includes students who stutter and students with language delays. While students who stutter focus on using pausing, students with language delays may be included to work on their own specific goals. And of course, students who stutter with concomitant language delays will benefit from practicing pausing while working on language goals. All activities may be used with a group of students or individually.

---

Also keep in mind that pausing may be (and often is) used in an integrated matter with other speech tools (Reitzes, 2006a, 2006b).

## Activities

### *Map Land*

Play a game called “Map Land.” In this game, students practice pausing while giving each other verbal directions. Provide each student with a piece of paper and a pencil and explain (while using pausing):

Today, we are going, to play, a game, called “Baseball Land” The, map, we will draw, is called, “Baseball Land,” because it, will include, towns and cities, that all, relate to, baseball. When, I am done, describing the map, we, should all have, maps, that look, almost the same. Then, we will give, each other, driving directions, while using pausing, to get, from town, to town. Notice, that I am, using pausing now, as I talk, to you. When, the first game, is over, each student, will then, get a chance, to design, his or her, own map.

Students often find it fun to have a theme for each map. Fun themes include favorite snacks, the names of favorite teachers, numbers and shapes. Using themes also helps children to work on language skills such as categorization and vocabulary building.

Begin by saying, “In, the middle, of your paper, I, want you, to draw, a baseball, that is, about the size, of a quarter.” Make sure that each student follows the direction correctly. Then say, “In, the upper, left corner, of your paper, draw, a, baseball mitt, that is, the size, of a finger.” Continue giving directions until your map is complete (see Appendix A for an example of a completed map using a baseball theme). Each map may have as many destinations as you feel appropriate. Typically, I choose to have between six and nine destinations on the first map

Give students the first few driving directions to follow. Say (while using pausing), “Draw, a straight line, from the baseball, to the bat.” Check to make sure that all students are following the directions correctly. You may hold up your own paper to show students what you have done. Then say, “Starting, at the bat, draw a line, from, the bat, to, the cleat, but, do not, go through, the baseball, or, the, catcher’s mitt” (see Appendix B to view the map at this point).

Then explain, “Now, you, will have the chance, to give directions, while using, pausing.” If students forget to use pausing, remind them to do so. Also, it is helpful to challenge students by saying, “I, will be listening, very closely, for good pausing.” Say this in a light and fun way so that students do not feel pressured. Then give students turns giving directions to the group until the map is complete. For example, you may say, “We, will visit, every stop, on the map, once, and then get back, to where, we started. Then, we will draw, a new map.”

You should be sure and take occasional turns giving directions. This allows you to continue to provide students with solid examples of pausing. You may also add an extra layer of fun by challenging students to listen carefully to your directions to see if they can catch you forgetting to use pausing during your turn. Of course, this means that you need to occasionally speak without pausing or with an exaggerated fast rate to give students the opportunity to catch your error.

Once the map is complete, give each student a turn to design their own map for the class to use. For example, if working with a student named Michael, you may say, “Okay, now, it is time, for us, to visit, ‘Michael Land.’ Michael, will describe, a map to the group, and we, will each, draw it. Then, we will each, take turns, giving directions, on Michael’s map.” Students tend to easily choose their own themes. At times, you may need to make suggestions. For example, if Michael’s class is studying sea creatures, you may suggest to Michael that he create a map based on “things you find in the ocean.”

To shorten the length of time that Map Land requires you may also prepare maps ahead of time and then simply pass them out to students. The Baseball Land map (Appendix A) included in this article was created using clip art found on the Internet. You may also create maps by hand or by piecing together artwork from the stacks of handouts, activity books, and photocopies that most speech-language pathologists tend to have in vast supply in their offices.

### *Tell Me A Joke*

Joke-telling (and humor in general) is often reported by people who stutter to be a difficult task because it may, and often does, elicit moments of stuttering. Practicing pausing during joke telling provides people who stutter with a productive strategy to use when facing a difficult speaking situation.

Gather together a large group of jokes appropriate for children (see Appendix C for some Jokes to get you started). One way to quickly gather children's jokes is by using the Internet. There are many, many Web sites that contain children's jokes that you may access for free and use for this activity. To do so, perform a Web search on a search engine such as [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) or [www.Yahoo.com](http://www.Yahoo.com). Use search words such as "children's jokes" or "jokes children school." This will bring up many Web sites with children's jokes. Then write the jokes you feel are appropriate on note cards. Insert pausing marks (commas) so students may practice pausing while telling jokes. For example, figures 1 and 2 contain a joke with pausing marks added.

A rectangular box with a thin black border containing the text "How, do, you catch, a squirrel?" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Figure 1.** The front of a joke card.

A rectangular box with a thin black border containing the text "You, run, up a tree, and act, like a nut!" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Figure 2.** The back of a joke card.

Explain to students, "Today we are going to be telling some really funny jokes using pausing. I am going to tell you a few right now." After telling a few jokes while using pausing announce, "It is now your turn to tell some jokes."

To proceed, take a student individually into the hallway, hand him or her a joke card, and then tell the student the joke using pausing. This enables the student to hear a strong model of both pausing and the appropriate vocal inflection that is so vital in joke-telling. Once the student is able to tell the joke to you in a convincing manner, re-enter the speech room and ask the student to tell the joke to the group.

At first, students may wish to read the joke from the note card. As this activity continues, work with students so that they memorize the joke and are able tell it to their peers without reading it from the note card. You may also encourage students to bring in their own favorite jokes and joke books.

### *Simon Says*

Explain to students (using pausing):

Today, we will, be playing, Simon Says. I, am going to, give everybody, a direction, to follow. I, will use pausing, while giving directions. Each, student and I, have, to follow, the direction. Then, the

---

student, on my left will repeat my direction, and add, another direction. Let's start. "Touch, your head" (everyone follows this direction). Now, the student, on my left, (point to that student) will repeat, my direction and add a new direction. If, you forget, to use pausing, or, if you forget, the directions, you are out. The, last player, left in the game, is, the winner!

The student on the left may say, "Touch, your head, then, clap your hands, three times." Continue this game until there is only one player left. Then, start over and play again. Because students will demonstrate different abilities to recall directions, you may wish to start each new round of this game with a different player so that everyone takes turns speaking first and last. This helps to provide each student with an opportunity to win a round.

### *Guess What I Am*

Explain to students:

Today we are going to play Guess What I Am. We will play while practicing our pausing. I will give you each a piece of paper and a pencil and ask you to write a few sentences while putting pausing marks (commas) after every one, two or three words. The first person to guess what is being described is the winner. If no one guesses, then the person reading the sentence wins.

Here is your first example. I am going to read you a sentence I have prepared with commas for pausing marks. The first person to guess what I am describing wins. Here goes. "You, eat me. You, buy me, at a deli, or, drug store. I, taste, very good. I, taste, sweet. I, am brown. I, come, in a wrapper. I, am made, by Hershey's..."

Once a student guesses that you are describing a chocolate bar, provide each student with a pencil and paper and ask them to each write down a description of something familiar to them such as a basketball, a slice of pizza, or a stapler. I often tell students, "Be sure that the thing you are describing is something that everyone here will know." You may also supply students with the objects to be described by giving each student a flashcard with a familiar object on it.

Other ways to play this game include using a point system and announcing that the first person to reach five or ten points is the winner. You may also give out bonus points if a student catches you forgetting to use pausing. Consider awarding yourself a bonus point if you catch a student forgetting to use pausing. Students will not get upset about this as long as you keep it fun and light. For example, if a student reads quickly, without remembering to pause at the commas, you may say in a jovial manner, "I caught you forgetting to pause. I get an extra point."

### *Tell Me A Story*

There are several ways to play this game. One-way is to choose several books that contain engaging and descriptive illustrations such as Curious George© books. Explain:

Today we are going to practice using pausing by making up a story using these books (point to the books you have gathered for this activity). I am going to choose a book that I have never read. I choose this one (hold up the book for everyone to see). Now I will tell you a story using the pictures in this book (If you know the book pretend that you have never read it). When I am done each student will get to choose a book and tell a story to the class.

Then tell the class a story using the pictures as a guide. Do not feel that you need to tell the story as it is written. Students often find this activity more fun and exciting if the group uses familiar books to create new stories or to slightly change the existing story line. For example, if you choose Curious George Goes to the Hospital, you may start by holding up the first page for students to see and beginning a story that you create using the illustrations. I often begin by saying (while using pausing):

A, monkey, named Frank, wanted to put, together a puzzle. Frank, decided, to eat the puzzle, because Frank, is very silly. Frank, began, to feel sick (turn the page and show students the next illustrations). Then, Frank's friend, tried to help, with the puzzle, and saw, that a piece, was missing. Frank's, friend, I will, call him Jim-Bob, started looking, for the missing piece. Frank, looked, very sick, and had, to go, to the hospital.

At this point, you may ask, "Who, wants, to help me, finish the story?" Then give students turn to tell parts of the story while using pausing. Of course, you may speak very fast at times so that students have the opportunity to "catch" you forgetting to pause.

Another way to play this game is to by asking students to bring to speech class a copy of a favorite book and to tell the real story (or a made up story) to the class using the illustrations as a guide.

## References

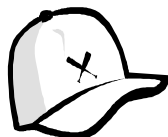
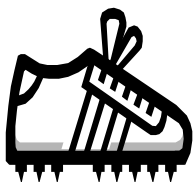
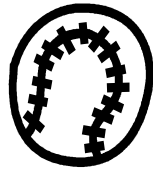
Reitzes, P. (2006a). 50 great activities for children who stutter: Lessons, insights and ideas for therapy success. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Reitzes, P. (2006b). Pausing: Reducing the frequency of stuttering. *The Journal of Stuttering Therapy, Advocacy and Research, 1*, 64-78.

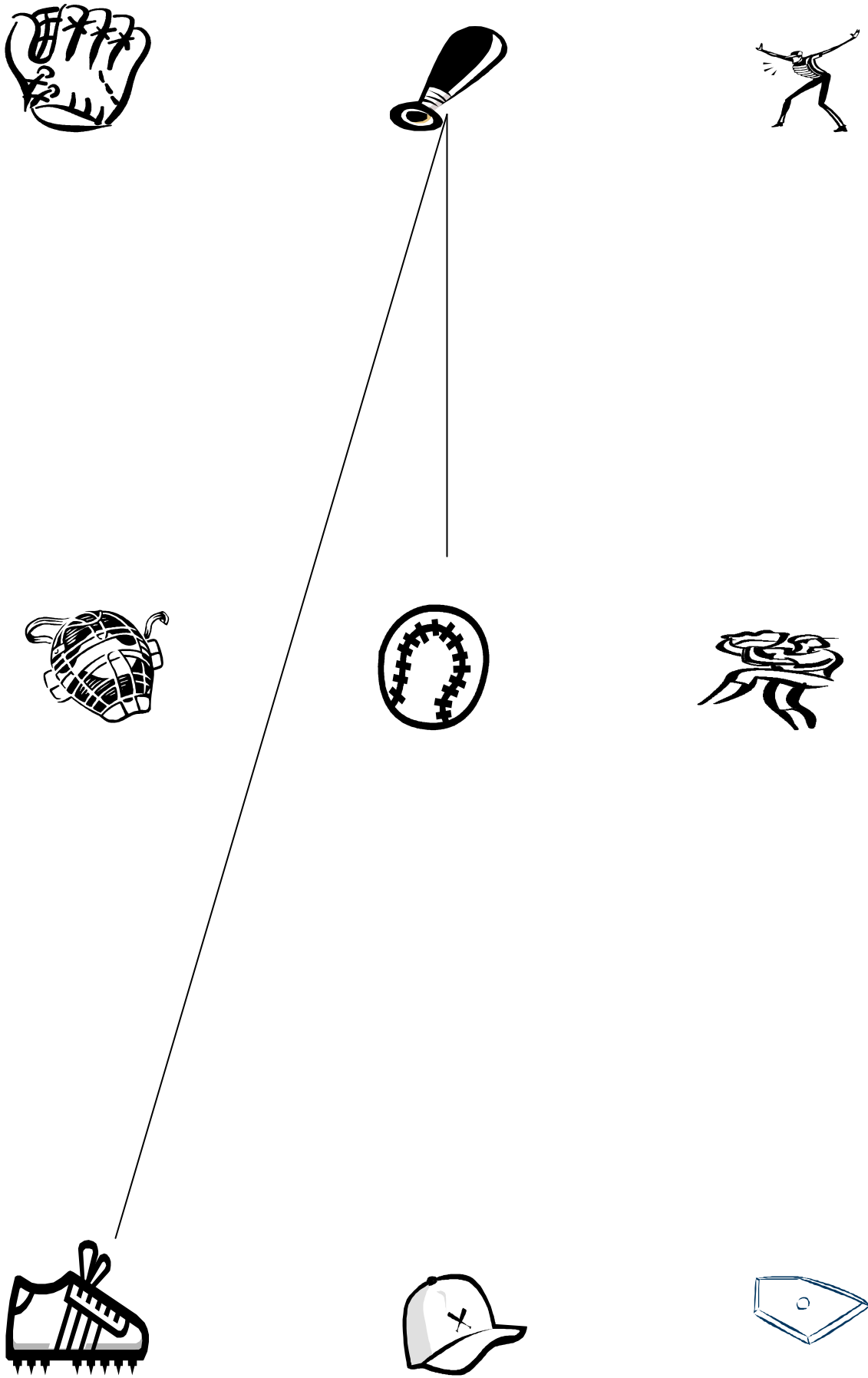
<http://www.journalofstuttering.com/1-2/Reitzes.2006.JSTAR.1.64-78.pdf>

---

Appendix A



Appendix B



---

## Appendix C

What is smarter than a talking cat?

*A spelling bee!*

Why don't skeletons fight each other?

*They don't have the guts!*

What did the spider do on the computer?

*It made a website!*

What time is it when an elephant sits on a table?

*Time to get a new table!*

What is the easiest way to count cows?

*You should use a cow-culator!*

What do you call cheese that is not yours?

*Nacho Cheese!*

Why are teddy bears never hungry?

*Because they are always stuffed!*

Why did Tommy throw the clock out of the window?

*Because he wanted to see time fly!*

Why are vampires unpopular?

*Because they are a pain in your neck!*

What did one pencil say to the other pencil?

*You are looking sharp!*

What is a cow's favorite subject in school?

*Moooooooooooo, isc!*

Why did the computer squeak?

*Because someone stepped on the mouse!*

Why did the school nurse run as fast as she could?

*To catch a cold!*

---

**Appendix C (continued)**

Why was the candle failing his grade at school?

*Because he was not very bright!*

Why was the math book so sad?

*Because it was full of problems!*

What school object is the king of the classroom?

*The ruler!*

How is baseball like pancakes?

They both need a good batter!

---