

Linked Relaxation Rhythm

Speech production normally involves some degree of muscle tension. The physiology and physics of speech require that a certain amount of tension be present; without it, respiration, phonation, and articulation could not take place (Borden & Harris, 1984).

Unfortunately, for children who stutter, levels of muscular tension frequently exceed what is natural and necessary for normal speech production.



Excessive tension can build throughout an utterance and lead to dysrhythmic breathing, hesitations, hard glottal onsets, repetitions, prolongations, and blocks (Bloodstein, 1995).

Tension can also lead to a generalized quality of choppiness.

This may occur in children's "fluent" speech as well as their stuttered speech. When speech is choppy, voicing starts and stops over and over again. Given that stutterers are typically disfluent on *initial* sounds, this frequent restarting of the voice increases the chances that stuttering will occur.

Linked Relaxation Rhythm is a rhythmic speech pattern that decreases tension and choppiness. It involves connecting syllables and words in a continuous way. Relaxed, continuous phonation is maintained as students oscillate the loudness of their voice by producing linked bell curves on successive syllables. Again, producing a bell curve involves initiating sound from just above a whisper, gradually rising to a normal loudness level, and then moving back to just above a whisper.

The oscillation of loudness is produced on each and every syllable, and thereby infuses students' connected speech with periodic cycles of relaxation. Thus, Linked Relaxation Rhythm effectively prevents tension from building throughout an utterance.

Linked Relaxation Rhythm can be taught in the following way:

1. Explain the rationale (described above and on page 45 of the Student Workbook).
2. Guide students through steps 1–2 of “Using Linked Relaxation Rhythm” (see page 46 of the Student Workbook). Provide models as indicated.
 - » As students use Stretched Speech to say the words listed in step 1, highlight the fact that they are using a bell curve as they produce each monosyllabic word in approximately one second.
 - » Tell students that Linked Relaxation Rhythm will require them to produce continuous, successive bell curves as they say polysyllabic words, phrases, and sentences.
3. Next, during step 3, model production of the polysyllabic words in the following way:
 - » Take a Relaxed Breath, make a Smooth Movement and one-second bell curve on the first syllable, and then move into the one-second bell curve of the next syllable without stopping your voice.
 - » There should be a constant “hum” as you oscillate your loudness in this manner. Your voice should sound as though you are *gently* undulating from one syllable to the next.
 - » If you run out of air when producing the longer words, simply stop wherever you need to and take a new Relaxed Breath.

4. Have students practice the same words.
 - » Be aware that students might mistakenly stop their voice between syllables or produce their bell curves in a “punchy” manner.
 - » Demonstrate these possible errors and encourage students not to make them.
 - » Tell students to keep their voicing continuous and the bell curve smooth and relaxed.
 - » Remind them to stop and take a new Relaxed Breath whenever they need to.
5. Guide students through steps 4 and 5 on page 47 of the Student Workbook. Provide models as indicated.
 - » As students purposefully stop and restart their voice between syllables *without* taking a new breath, point out that even if gaps are only a split second long, continuous phonation has stopped.
6. Remind students that all their fluency strategies (Relaxed Breath, Stretched Speech, Smooth Movement, Easy Voice, and Light Contact) work together as they use Linked Relaxation Rhythm.
 - » Relaxed Breath provides a source of relaxation that enables students to maintain continuous phonation. Stretched Speech, Smooth Movement, Easy Voice, and Light Contact help them to merge sounds and words without stopping.
 - » Light Contact is particularly helpful with hard consonant sounds such as p, b, t, d, k, and g. Remind students that in order to effectively link words that start with these sounds, they will need to “gloss” over the consonant with a very light tap and focus their attention on the subsequent vowel as they gently transition into an Smooth Movement and Easy Voice.

7. Have students do additional practice with Linked Relaxation Rhythm using all the Smooth Movement, Easy Voice, and Light Contact Phrases and Sentences (see pages 48–53 of the Student Workbook).
8. When students are proficient with Linked Relaxation Rhythm at the sentence level, introduce activities that involve conversational speech.

A/V Resources for Linked Relaxation Rhythm

Audio Files

[Track 2.6](#): Linked Relaxation Rhythm [1:16]

[Track 2.7](#): Using Linked Relaxation Rhythm (LLR) [4:43]

[Track 2.8](#): Smooth Movement Phrases read at LRR [1:42]

[Track 2.9](#): Easy Voice Phrases read at LRR [1:40]

[Track 2.10](#): Light Contact Phrases read at LRR [1:48]

[Track 2.11](#): Smooth Movement Sentences read at LRR [2:25]

[Track 2.12](#): Easy Voice Sentences read at LRR [2:39]

[Track 2.13](#): Light Contact Sentences read at LRR [2:00]

Video Files

[v45](#) Therapist Instruction #1: Younger Student [3:05]

[v46](#) Therapist Instruction #2: Older Student [1:18]

[v44](#) Student Example #1: Workbook Words and Phrases [3:46]

[v47](#) Student Example #2: Smooth Movement Paragraph [1:05]

[v48](#) Student Example #3: Game Activity [1:57]

[v49](#) Student Example #4: Conversation [1:39]

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