

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

There are several kinds of speech impairments, including stuttering, articulation problems, and voice disorders. Severe speech impairment can be frustrating to both the disabled person and to the listener. It takes courage to speak up in class when you know that the listener may not readily understand. Speech impaired students who prefer to refrain from speaking out in class should have alternate requirements in lieu of class discussion or oral examinations. However, it cannot be automatically assumed that all students with speech impairments will not want to participate in class discussions. Most speech impaired students can communicate and should be encouraged to use what communication skills they possess. Be patient; pressure to communicate increases anxiety and produces further frustration for everyone. Allow the student to complete his/her statement without saying the words for him/her. Remember that the ability to articulate is not a measure of intelligence. Your attitude of acceptance and respect will set an example for the class.

Some students may not be able to speak well and could have other physical disabilities which may limit their writing ability. They may use a pointer held in the mouth or affixed to their head. They may point to words or letters on a spelling board; an assistant can then speak the words for the student. Other, more sophisticated, electronic equipment is used by some people.

IN GENERAL:

- Talk, ask questions, and make remarks as usual.
- The disabled individual may speak, but very slowly and indistinctly. Ask for appropriate clarification. Be patient.
- Speak naturally, using the sentence structure you normally use. There is no need to speak in "simple language," or to raise your voice, or to speak through someone else.
- If you do not understand, do not pretend that you do.