

Listening and Spoken Language Knowledge Center

For children and adults with hearing loss, their families and the professionals who support them

Alexander Graham Bell
—TRANSLATING AND ADAPTING
TO THE HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Communication Options

What Are My Child's Communication Options?

- What are communications options?
- Why do I need to select one for my child?
- A brief look at:
 - Listening and Spoken Language
 - Cued Speech/Language
 - American Sign Language/Bilingual-Bicultural
 - Total Communication Method

What are communication options?

For years many professionals in the hearing loss community talked with families about communications “options” for their child; however, it is more common today to use the term “outcomes” because professionals are more focused on the success of the child. There are several outcomes for a person with hearing loss to choose from to communicate with their family, peers and the rest of the world. When a doctor, teacher or other person involved with your child talks about communications outcomes, they are talking about the four main types of language for people with hearing loss: Listening and Spoken Language, Cued Speech/Language, American Sign Language/Bilingual-Bicultural and Total Communication Method.

Why do I need to select one for my child?

It is called a communication outcome because each of these communication methods requires hard work and dedication, from learning the method to mastery. It is important to stick with one option for long enough to determine that it is the right one for you and your family and that it is reaching your desired goals. A child's brain is ready to learn language at an early age. Even though they are not able to understand or communicate back right away, you are laying the foundation of learning language from day one.

It is important to understand that any decision for your child's future is for you to make as a family. You will have many decisions to make, and you as the parent/guardian of your child know what is best for them.

Many people struggle with these decisions, and for good reason. Making these decisions about your child's future can be scary. The advice we hear most often is to trust your instinct. Learn as much as you can about the different communications outcomes, and determine what is best for your child and your family.

Listening and Spoken Language

This approach to language development requires that infants and young children with hearing loss are taught to listen and talk with the support hearing technology, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants. Parents and caregivers are supported in their role as the child's most important teacher of language, and the goal is for the child to attend mainstream schools. Read more about [Listening and Spoken Language](#).

Cued Speech/Language

Cued Speech is a visual communication system that can be used to demonstrate phonetic information for children who may not be able to learn entirely through amplified hearing. Designed to enhance lipreading ability, Cued Speech combines the natural mouth movements of speech with eight hand shapes (cues) that represent different sounds of speech. Read more about [Cued Speech/Language](#).

American Sign Language/Bilingual-Bicultural

American Sign Language is a manual communication language taught as a child's primary language, with English taught as a second language. American Sign Language uses hand symbols and gestures combined with facial expressions to communicate language. American Sign Language is recognized as a true language in its own right and does not follow the grammatical structure of English. This method is used extensively within the Deaf community, a group that views itself as having a separate culture and identity from mainstream hearing society. Read more about [American Sign Language](#).

Total Communication Method

Total Communication uses a combination of methods to teach a child, including a form of sign language, finger spelling, speech reading, speaking and amplification. The sign systems used in Total Communication are typically based in English word order and follow English grammatical structure, and do not represent a separate language as with American Sign Language. Read more about [Total Communication Method](#).

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