

- American Sign Language
- Auditory Verbal
- Aural-Oral
- Bilingualism
- Cued Speech
- Manually Coded English
- Simultaneous/ Total Communication



Questions

- What is the difference between a language and a communication method?
- What are the most common options for communication?
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A language is a shared “code” that defines the meaning of words and the rules for how words are combined to convey ideas to others. English and American Sign Language (ASL) are examples of languages. Communication methods are various ways to help a child learn one or both of these languages. Most communication methods in the United States are ways to learn or represent English. ASL is a separate language and the bilingual method is a way of learning two languages.

- What are the most common or widely used communication methods?

Aural-Oral: In this method, listening is the primary means for learning language. Speech is the primary means of expressing language. The use of residual hearing is very important. Children are encouraged to wear hearing aids during their waking hours. For this method to be effective, aided hearing must be within a range where speech can be heard. If a child cannot hear speech, even with hearing aids, then a cochlear implant may be an option. In addition to listening, a child is encouraged to watch the speaker to get additional information from speechreading (lipreading), facial expressions and gestures. Hearing through hearing aids or through a cochlear implant, even in the best of circumstances, is not the same as typical hearing. Early intervention will include specific strategies for increased emphasis on listening and communication.

Auditory-Verbal: This method represents a specific philosophy within the broader aural-oral category. Development of language through listening and the use of residual hearing are central to this method. Use of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants will be the same as in the aural-oral method. One on one teaching with a specially trained auditory-verbal therapist is a important part of this method. There is little, if any, emphasis on visual clues such as speechreading or gesture during therapy sessions. Parents participate in all therapy sessions and use the same techniques at home. Families who use an auditory-verbal approach are encouraged to place their children in regular preschool and general education classes rather than special education or deaf education classes.

Manually Coded English (MCE): This method uses a visual (signed) form of the English language. English is visually represented (coded) through manual signs. There are a number of systems for manually coding English and each one has its own rules and variations. Most of the systems use American Sign Language signs as a base and also use English word order. Since manually coded English follows English language rules, it is easier for hearing parents to learn and use with their children. All sign language methods require a commitment from all family members to learn and use signs for all communication with the child. If sign communication is chosen, it’s important for parents to learn sign as quickly as possible so that their children can learn language from them in the same natural way that a child with hearing learns from his or her parents.



Simultaneous and Total Communication: These methods refer to a combination of oral communication and signed communication. In the **simultaneous** method (also known as Sim-Com), parents are encouraged to both speak and sign when they communicate with their children. Some form of manually coded English is used for the sign system. Children wear hearing aids and are encouraged to develop and use their residual hearing as well as sign and speech. The term **total communication** is a broader term and refers to speaking and signing as well as the use of speechreading and print.

Cued Speech: Cued speech is a method of representing English in a way that makes it visually available through a combination of speechreading and handshapes and hand positions near the face that provide additional information. For example, the sounds **p**, **b**, and **m** all look the same on the lips and as a result, the words pat, bat and mat all look exactly the same. There are different hand shapes for the **p**, **b**, and **m** which allow a person who knows the cueing system, to understand exactly which word is being said. For the method to work, both the speaker and the listener must know the system.

American Sign Language: American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual-gestural-spatial language in which the placement, movement, and expression of the hands and body are part of the language. Research has demonstrated that ASL is a complete language with its own grammar and syntax. ASL is considered by the Deaf community to be the native language of people who are Deaf. It is often the preferred language for individuals who are Deaf, even when they are fluent in both ASL and English. Children born to parents who are Deaf learn ASL in the same way that hearing children learn spoken language from hearing parents. Since ASL is not a “method” of learning English but a separate language, hearing parents must work with those fluent in ASL to learn the language and to provide their child with the opportunity to learn ASL.

Bilingual Language Development: Bilingual means knowing or being fluent in two languages. For a person living in the United States who is Deaf, the two languages are usually ASL and English. When a child is born to parents who are Deaf, the language of the home and the first language of the child is usually ASL with English as a second language. When a child is born to parents who are hearing, the language of the home and the first language of the child would typically be English (or whatever language is spoken in the home). In a Bilingual method, the hearing family learns and uses ASL in addition to English. In some programs, the family uses English and the school program uses ASL in the early years and adds English as a second language as the child gets older.