

UNDERSTANDING SPEECH & LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES • TEACHER RESOURCE

Speech and language impairments affect how students communicate. Some students may have difficulty producing speech sounds, while others may struggle to understand or use language effectively. These challenges can influence classroom participation, learning, and social interactions. With appropriate supports, visual instruction, and high expectations, students with speech and language impairments can successfully learn and communicate in the ASL classroom.

What Are Speech & Language Impairments?

Speech impairments involve difficulties with articulation, voice, or fluency. Language impairments affect a student's ability to understand, process, or express ideas. Some students experience one area of difficulty, while others experience both.

What You May Notice in an ASL Classroom

- Difficulty expressing ideas verbally.
- Challenges understanding complex directions.
- Slower language processing.
- Hesitation when participating in discussions.
- Greater success when information is presented visually.

Student Strengths

- Strong visual learning abilities.
- Success with demonstrations and modeling.
- Growth through repetition and meaningful practice.
- Creative problem-solving and nonverbal communication skills.
- Increased confidence in supportive learning environments.

How Teachers Can Help

- Present information using clear visual supports.
- Model signs and concepts explicitly.
- Allow additional processing and response time.
- Break complex directions into smaller steps.
- Encourage communication through multiple appropriate methods.

Things to Avoid

- Finishing students' responses for them.
- Rushing communication or instruction.
- Assuming speech difficulties reflect intelligence.
- Overlooking strengths in visual communication.

★ Remember

Students with speech and language impairments have valuable ideas to share. By creating a supportive, visually accessible classroom and providing appropriate communication supports, teachers help students participate fully while working toward the same learning objectives.