

Communication Options for a Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

There are a variety of communication options available for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Since every child is unique and different in their response to these techniques, the parents or caregivers are in the best position to decide which option to use.



Oral Method

The Oral Method of communication utilizes speech reading (lip reading) and the maximal use of a child's residual hearing for the development and production of speech. The premise behind this method is that a child who is deaf or hard of hearing will then be able to communicate more effectively with hearing individuals.

Cued Speech Method

Cued Speech facilitates lip reading by having the speaker simultaneously use hand gestures while speaking to help the listener visually distinguish between similar looking sounds on the speaker's lips.

Manual Communication Methods

Manual methods of communication utilize a child's ability to communicate through visual stimuli such as finger spelling and sign languages.

American Sign Language (ASL) is composed of positions and gestures made with the hands, body and facial expressions to convey abstract concepts as with any spoken language. Being its own language, ASL has a distinct grammatical structure which is quite dissimilar to English.

Manual English uses many of the traditional ASL signs, while maintaining the English word order and grammar so as to develop a child's ability to read and write English. Examples of this system are: Seeing Essential English (SEE I), Signing Exact English (SEE II) and Signed English.

Finger spelling augments most sign language systems by using hand shapes to code the letters of the alphabet as well as numbers. Words (i.e., proper names, places, etc.) are then spelled out by using these individual letter codes.

Total Communication (TC) Method

The philosophical basis for Total Communication (TC) is for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing to use any and all communication methods necessary to facilitate language acquisition. This system, which typically uses signs in English word order, may include: speech, finger spelling, manual signs, gestures, speech reading, cued speech and augmentation of residual hearing (hearing aids). This mode of communication may utilize any combination of the communication options listed above.