

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Building a Strong Foundation: Better Hearing and Speech Month

by Rynette Kjesbo, M.S., CCC-SLP

May is *Better Hearing and Speech Month*. It is a time to raise awareness about communication disorders (problems with speech, voice, language, and/or hearing) and the roles that Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Audiologists play in treating them. A 2023 national poll by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) revealed that during the last two years (i.e., following the height of the pandemic), most of the SLPs and Audiologists who participated in the poll reported receiving more referrals for young children (birth to five years) due to concerns regarding hearing, speech, and language delays.



ASHA's poll found that the main factor preventing parents and caregivers from reporting potential communication disorders is lack of awareness:



- 41% of SLPs reported that signs of a speech-language delay or disorder in young children go unnoticed by parents/caregivers for 1–2 years, on average.



- 40% of responding audiologists reported that symptoms of hearing loss in young children go unnoticed by parents/caregivers for 6 months to 1 year, on average.



- Nearly half (48%) of respondents (SLPs and audiologists) indicated that, on average, parents/caregivers wait 6 months to 1 year after observing symptoms of hearing loss or speech-language delay/disorder before they seek help.

Identify the Signs

Signs of a Speech Sound Disorder:



- Says p, b, m, h, and w incorrectly in words (2–3 years)
- Says k, g, f, t, d, and n incorrectly in words (3–4 years)
- Produces speech that is unclear, even to familiar people (2–3 years)

Signs of a Language Disorder:



- Does not smile or interact with others (birth and older)



- Does not babble (4–6 months)
- Makes only a few sounds or gestures, like reaching (7–9 months)
- Does not understand what others say (10 months – 2 years)



- Says only a few words (19 months – 2 years)



- Does not put words together to make sentences (19 months – 3 years)
- Speaks using words that are not easily understood by others (3–4 years)



- Has trouble with early reading skills, like pretending to read or finding the front of a book (4–5 years)

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students
(cont.)

("Identify the Signs" continued...)

Signs of Stuttering:



- Repeats the first sounds of words—"b-b-b-ball" for "ball"
- Stretches sounds out—"ffffff-farm" for "farm"
- Shows frustration when trying to get words out

Signs of a Voice Disorder:



- Loss of voice
- Uses a hoarse or breathy voice
- Speaks with strain and effort

Signs of a Hearing Loss:



- Does not alert to sound (birth – 3 months)
- Does not respond when you call their name (7–9 months)



- Does not follow simple directions (13–18 months)
- Shows delays in speech and language development (birth – 3 years)



- Has difficulty achieving academically, especially in reading and math
- Is socially isolated and unhappy in school



If you suspect your child may have difficulties with speech, language, or hearing, check with your child's pediatrician about getting an evaluation from a certified SLP or audiologist. If your child is in school, you can discuss your concerns with his/her teacher. Identifying a communication disorder early plays a key role in how soon effective and appropriate treatment can take place.

Related Handy Handouts®:

[162 – What is a Speech-Language Pathologist?](#)

[163 – What is an Audiologist?](#)

[434 – The Speech-Language Pathologist's Role in Stroke Recovery](#)

Resources:

"Identify the Signs," accessed May 1, 2023, <https://identifythesigns.org/>

"Poll Shows Increases in Hearing, Speech, and Language Referrals, More Communication Challenges in Young Children," accessed May 1, 2023, <https://www.asha.org/news/2023/poll-shows-increases-in-hearing-speech-and-language-referrals-more-communication-challenges-in-young-children/>

For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to www.handyhandouts.com