

# Speech vs Language

**Speech and language are very different, and a student can have a problem with one or both.**

## Speech

Speech is how we say and produce sounds and includes articulation, voice, and fluency.

- **Articulation:** How we make speech sounds using the mouth, lips, and tongue. For example, we need to be able to say the "r" sound to say "rabbit" instead of "wabbit."
- **Voice:** How we use our vocal folds and breath to make sounds. Our voice can be loud or soft or high- or low-pitched. We can hurt our voices by talking too much, yelling, or coughing a lot.
- **Fluency:** This is the rhythm of our speech. We sometimes repeat sounds or pause while talking. People who do this a lot may stutter.

## Language

Language refers to the words we use and how we use them to share ideas and get what we want. It includes:

- What words mean, some words have different meanings.
- How to make new words, like "friend," "friendly," or "unfriendly" means something different.
- How to put words together.
- What we should say at different times. For example, we might be polite and say, "Would you mind moving your foot?" But, if the person does not move, we may say, "Get off my foot!"

**Students can have trouble with speech, language, or both. Having trouble understanding what others say is a receptive language disorder. Having problems sharing our thoughts, ideas, and feelings is an expressive language disorder. It is possible to have both a receptive and an expressive language problem.**

Receptive language refers to our ability to understand language that we hear, read, and even see. A speech-language pathologist (SLP) may work with students to help them understand concepts, follow directions, expand their vocabulary, reading comprehension, figurative language, and more. We need these skills to follow along in a classroom, to make sense of what we're learning, and to understand what's being asked of us - like on a test!

Expressive language is the way we use language to communicate with others like through speaking, writing, using signs, or augmentative communication devices. It includes the way we use sounds, words, and sentences to communicate. SLPs are experts in communication and can help students who struggle with skills like grammar, vocabulary, and word order.

Speech sounds are the most well-known of areas with which speech-language pathologists work. SLPs are experts in the sounds we make, and how we make them. They work to help students improve move different parts of their mouth (articulators) to the right place and in the right way to produce sounds clearly and correctly. Some students may have trouble producing individual sounds, like R, S, or TH. Others may have difficulty with entire groups of sounds and produce errors in predictable patterns (like producing all their K and G sounds as Ts and Ds - like saying "doh" for "go"). There are also speech disorders that are caused by difficulties with motor planning and these children may require more intensive speech therapy. For more information, please visit [this website](#) or contact one of our SLPs!