



# Speech Therapy

## What it is and Why it Matters

Communication can be a challenge for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. To support them as they learn to communicate, professionals known as speech language pathologists are often utilized. Speech therapy is training to help people with speech and language problems speak more clearly. This type of training has proven beneficial in verbal and non-verbal diagnoses. In many cases, speech therapy has helped non-verbal youth with ASD to become verbal, and it is for this reason speech therapy cannot be overlooked.

## U.S. Speech and Language Statistics

- 5% of U.S. children ages 3-17 have a speech disorder that lasted for a week or longer during the past 12 months.
- The prevalence of speech sound disorders (namely, articulation disorders or phonological disorders) in young children is 8 to 9%. By the first grade, roughly 5% of children have noticeable speech disorders, including stuttering, speech sound disorders, and dysarthria; the majority of these speech disorders have no known cause
- Approximately 2% of children with a language disorder also have an existing medical condition (e.g., autism, intellectual disability)

**Source:** <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-voice-speech-language#6>

## Benefits of Speech Therapy

- Therapy treatments utilize a variety of communication supports including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). AAC can include sign language, gestures, pictures, computer tablets, and other electronic devices.
- Therapy assists children with recognizing social cues, taking turns in conversation, and getting along with others in various settings.
- Therapy can help children develop reading and writing skills
- Therapy supports children's ability to move from one task or setting to another allowing them to more readily accept change thereby expanding their interests i.e., trying new foods and activities.

**Source:** <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/>

