



-ECHOLALIA-
GOOD OR BAD?

You may have heard toddlers mimic noises and words when they hear others speak. This repetition or imitation of sounds, phrases, or words is called "echolalia". The term comes from the Greek words "echo" and "lalia," which mean "to repeat speech".

IS IT OK TO
HAVE
ECHOLALIA?

Repetitive speech is an extremely common part of language development, and is commonly seen in young toddlers who are learning to communicate. By the age of 2, most of the children will start mixing in their own utterances along with repetitions of what they hear. By age 3, most children's echolalia will be minimal at most.

Echolalia is the repetition or echoing of words or sounds that you hear someone else say. It is an important step for language development in children. They may not be able to communicate effectively because they struggle to express their own thoughts. For example, someone with echolalia might only be able to repeat a question rather than answer it. In many cases, echolalia is an attempt to communicate, learn language, or practice language.

**Echolalia is a sign of autism,
developmental disability, or
communication disability in children
over the age of 3.**

**They may need extra time to process the
world around them and what people say
to them. This causes them to copy or
repeat the sounds or words they hear.**

Echolalia can also be a sign of autism or developmental disability in children or neurological problems in adults.

Children often learn to speak by repeating words that they hear. Echolalia is commonly seen in toddlers during the first 3 years. Echolalia can be a problem if it continues in children older than 3.

It's common for autistic children or developmental delays to have echolalia further into childhood, especially if they're experiencing delayed speech development. Identifying why and how your child is using echolalia will help you develop a treatment plan for it.

Consulting a Speech-Language Pathologist can help.

It can be immediate, with the speaker repeating something right away after hearing it. It can also be delayed, with the speaker repeating something hours or days after hearing it.

Other signs of echolalia may include frustration during conversations, depression, and muteness. A person with echolalia may be unusually irritable, especially when asked questions.

**Echolalia is “unmitigated”
when you repeat
someone’s exact words. It
can also be “mitigated” if
you change them during
repetition.**

All children experience echolalia when they learn a spoken language. Most develop independent thought as they age, but some continue to repeat what they hear. Children with communication disabilities hold on to echoed expressions much longer. Autistic children are particularly susceptible to echolalia.

A professional can diagnose echolalia by having a conversation with the person with echolalia. If they struggle to do anything other than repeat what has been said, they may have echolalia. Some autistic children are regularly tested for this, during their speech sessions.