



# Let's Talk

## Early Identification of Speech, Language, and Swallowing Problems

“My husband is really worried about our 17-month-old daughter, Nolette. She’s slow in walking and talking. She already has tons of doctor’s appointments. We just don’t need one more. Why would she need help with her speech when she doesn’t even talk yet. Can’t we wait to get her help when she starts school?” —Kirsten

### What Is Early Identification?

Early identification is a way to find out if a child up to age 3 has or may have a delay in development. Early identification is important if you are worried about your child’s development in any way.

Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, help to identify young children who have or may have trouble with speech or language development or with swallowing.

### Why Should I Worry About My Child’s Speech and Language?

Speech and language problems make it hard for your child to talk to friends and family. Later on, your child could have more problems at school. That is why it is important to find out if your child has speech and language problems. This can be done through an evaluation.

### What Happens During an Evaluation?

Your child may be seen for an evaluation by one person or a team of people. Your child may see an SLP, an audiologist, a child development specialist, a physical therapist, or others. You are an important member of the team.

The SLP will:

- Watch your child play
- See how your child communicates with you and others
- Write down exactly what your child says (this is called a language sample)

### Fast facts

- Early identification is a program that helps children who have or may have delays in their development.
- Identifying problems early means that children can get the help they need as early as possible.
- Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, help with early identification of speech, language, and swallowing problems.



## Early Identification of Speech, Language, and Swallowing Problems

- Look at your child's reading and writing skills
- Watch how your child eats and drinks

An evaluation may take more than one visit. It is important to have as much information as possible about your child. The team will get information from you, your child's doctor, and child care workers.

### How Can I Help With the Evaluation?

You know your child best.

#### **You can keep track of your child's progress in listening and talking:**

- Is your child still babbling?
- When did she say her first word?
- What language do you speak in the home? Are you teaching your child more than one language?
- Does your child use gestures and words?
- Does she know how to ask for a snack?
- Does she follow simple directions?

#### **You can check your child's hearing:**

- Does it seem like you have to shout or clap or snap your fingers just to be noticed?
- Does your child turn his head when you call his name?

#### **Watch how your child plays:**

- Do peekaboo and pat-a-cake make your child smile and giggle?
- Does your child play with toys like you'd expect?

#### **Think about any eating or drinking problems:**

- Does your child only want to drink from a bottle?
- Does she have trouble chewing food?
- Does she cough or choke when eating?

Be sure to tell the SLP about any feeding problems.

### What Happens After an Evaluation?

The team will tell you how your child did during the evaluation. Your child may need "early intervention" services if he has any speech, language, or other problems.



## Early Identification of Speech, Language, and Swallowing Problems

You can help your child with speech and language skills whether or not he needs early intervention. You can:

- Talk about what you are doing as you do it, like “I’m making dinner now.”
- Read to your child every day.
- Give short directions, like “Get the book.”
- Show how happy you are when your child says new sounds or words.
- Show that you are listening and repeat what your child says. Add to what your child says.

It will not confuse your child to speak more than one language. Talk and read to your child in whatever language you are most comfortable using.

“The early identification team found that Nolette was delayed in speech and language development. She is now getting early intervention services. We hope that finding out about her problems this early will mean that she’ll be ready for school.”

—Kirsten

### Identify speech, language, and swallowing problems early. Help is available.

To learn more about speech, language, and swallowing problems or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org) or call **800-638-8255** or (TTY) **301-296-5650**.

My SLP’s name is

---

Appointment

---

Compliments of  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)  
and