



Let's Talk

Learning Disabilities and School-Age Children

“Anton has never been much of a talker. He was a little slow learning to read, but we weren't too worried until now. He's in fourth grade and still isn't reading much. He doesn't remember what he reads. He's had a lot of problems writing too. Other kids are writing full pages, and he spends an hour writing three sentences. The teacher says that it's time to refer him to the school team. She says that a speech-language pathologist should be on the team.”

—Jacque

What Are Some Signs of a Learning Disability?

Sometimes learning disabilities are called *dyslexia* or *language-based learning disabilities*. *Dyslexia* is a reading problem. The term *language-based learning disability* shows the strong connection between spoken language (speaking and listening) and written language (reading, writing, and spelling).

A child with learning disabilities may have some of the following language problems:

Understanding

- Has difficulty understanding questions or following directions
- Finds it hard to learn new words from school and books
- Doesn't remember details from a story or from class
- Has trouble understanding some hand gestures or facial expressions
- Has trouble telling time

Talking

- Has trouble saying what he thinks
- Uses vague words like “thing” or “stuff”
- Makes up and mispronounces words

Fast facts

- Language problems often lead to learning disabilities.
- Problems with reading and writing are linked to problems with speaking and understanding.
- Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, can help.

- Has a hard time saying numbers in order, like telephone numbers and addresses
- Has problems learning words to songs and rhymes

Reading

- Doesn't know or confuses letters and numbers
- Has problems learning the alphabet
- Doesn't sound out words
- Doesn't show much interest in stories or books
- Has trouble reading out loud and understanding when reading

Writing

- Mixes up the order of letters in words
- Mixes up the order of numbers for math
- Makes a lot of spelling mistakes
- Doesn't like writing
- Has trouble rereading and correcting his work

How Can a Speech-Language Pathologist Help My Child?

A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, is part of a team with you, your child's teachers, and other professionals. The SLP will test how your child speaks, understands, reads, writes, and spells. The SLP will see if your child has language problems that are leading to learning problems in school.

An SLP will work with your child on her individual needs. The SLP may:

- Help your child learn letters and the sounds that go with them.
- Work with your child on skills to help her learn how to sound out words.
- Help your child learn new words.
- Help your child answer questions or give a summary of a story.
- Have your child guess what will happen next in a story.
- Have your child retell a story and act it out.



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The SLP often will use what your child is learning in class to work on goals. Your child's textbooks and assignments can be used to help with reading, writing, and practicing for oral reports. The SLP will work closely with your child's teacher and may work directly in the classroom.

The SLP may also give you ideas on how to help your child at home. The earlier your child gets help, the better.

“The team had Anton tested. He has a language-learning disability. He has been working with the SLP. Now, he sounds out words when he gets stuck. He's writing five sentences. He still struggles, but I'm glad that he's getting the help that he needs from the SLP.”

—Jacque

Learning disabilities can change your child's life. Help is available.

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

You can find more information about learning disabilities at LD Online at www.ldonline.org and the National Center for Learning Disabilities at www.LD.org.

My SLP's name is

Appointment

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